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The #1 Computer Game Magazine

Computer Gaming World

JANUARY 1997
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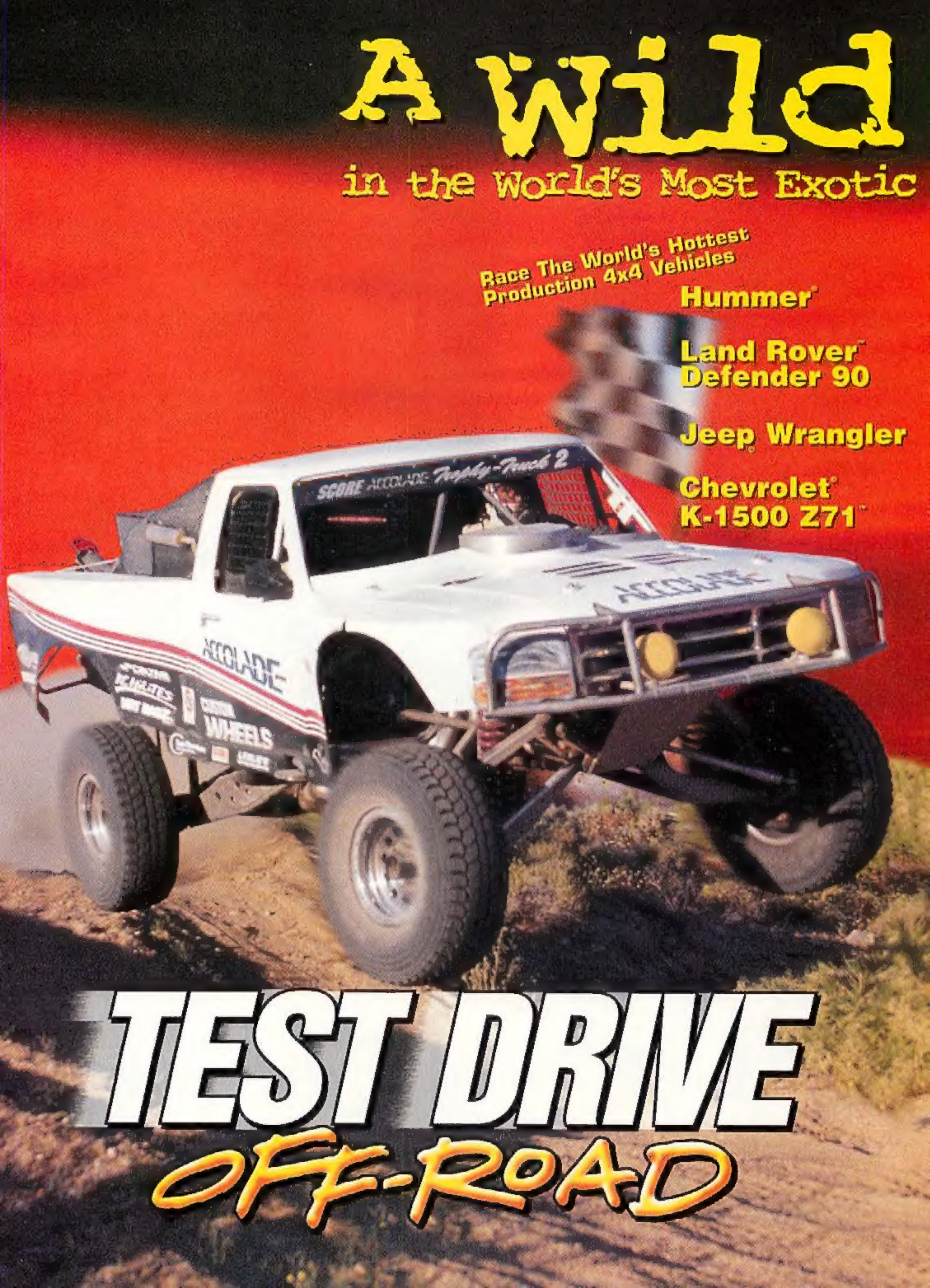
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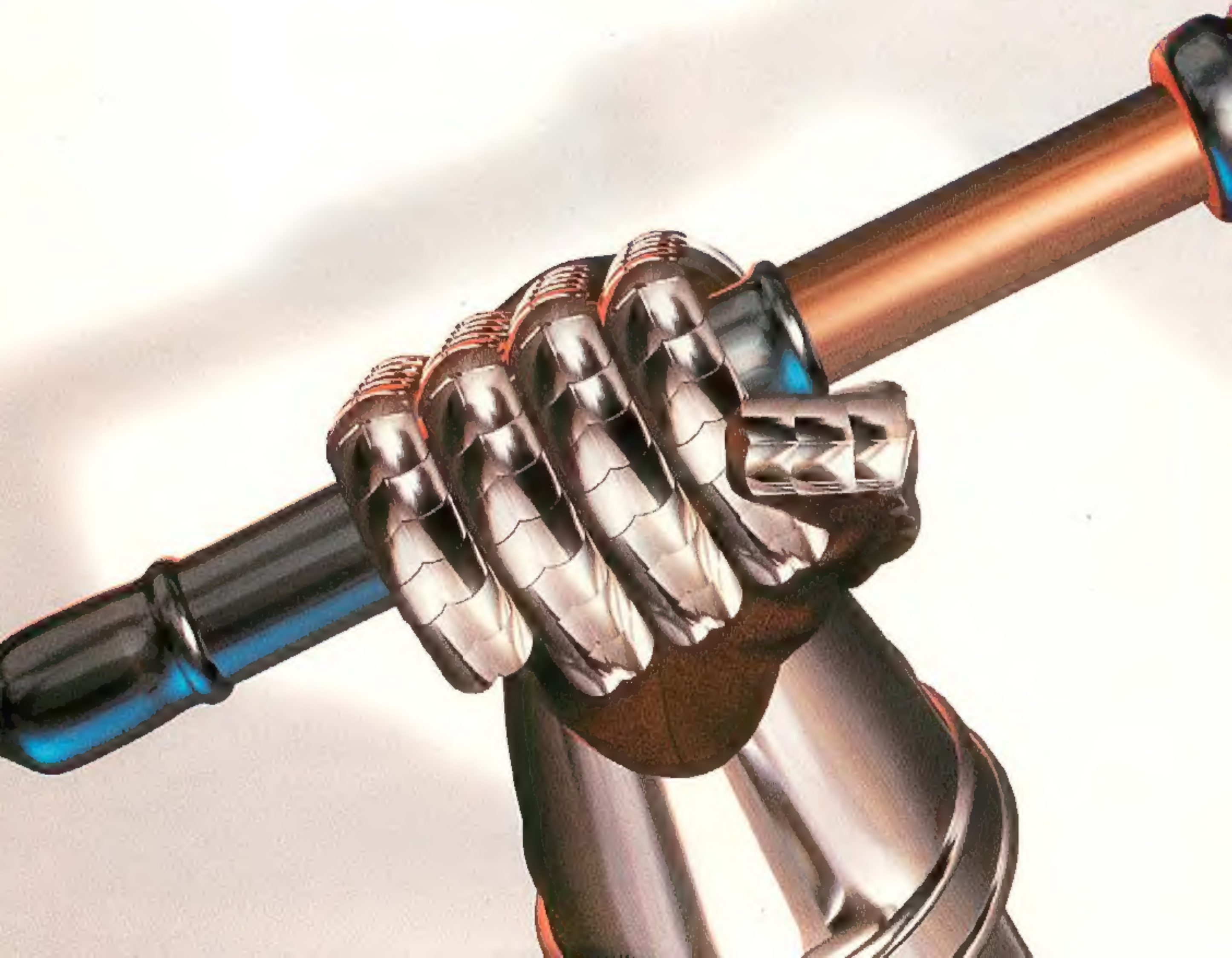

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Computer Gaming World

FEATURES

50 COVER STORY
Star Wars!

The Force is stronger than ever! Associate Editor Elliott "Come To The Dark Side" Chin boards the Death Star to investigate the latest on LucasArts' upcoming trilogy of Star Wars games—Star Wars Rebellion, Jedi Knight, and X-Wing vs TIE Fighter. Will 1997 be the best year yet for this great franchise?

SCIENCE FICTION STRATEGY GUIDE

Having trouble colonizing that planet? Can't get your mech into fighting shape? Do a mind meld with the CGW editors as we take you through four of the hottest sci-fi based games of the year, with tips and strategies to get you out of those tough spots.

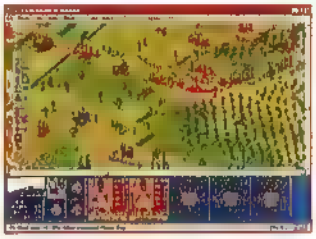
HARDWARE

117 The Ultimate Gaming Machine Part 2

Imagine having $9,000 to spend. Then imagine spending it to assemble the best gaming system on the planet. What would you buy? Check out contributing technowizard Loyd Case's component-by-component shopping list for the ultimate gaming rig.

SNEAK PREVIEWS!

STRATEGY & TIPS



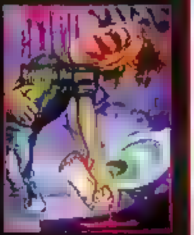
COLUMNS

DEPARTMENTS

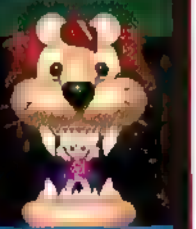
REVIEWS

ADVENTURE/ROLE-PLAYING

ACTION



CLASSICS/PUZZLES



SPORTS

SIMULATION

STRATEGY/WARGAMES

The 1996 CGW Article Index ... see page 316

> Abort training missions
...Aborting Command and Conquer
...Aborting Warcraft 2
> Initiate full-scale war
...Initiating Dark Reign
04

> Advanced Unit AI

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This is not a game.

Is it a game when your stomach lurches in the course of performing a Cuban eight? Is it a game when beads of sweat appear on your forehead while flying under London's Tower Bridge to digitally sampled sound? No. This is not a game. This is Microsoft® Flight Simulator for Windows® 95, the latest upgrade to the most realistic PC flight simulation available anywhere.

Experienced sim pilots will relish logging time in their new Boeing 737-400 and aerobatic Extra 300S, extending the range of experience beyond the four planes already in the fleet. A heightened level of realistic flight dynamics has been achieved, as verified by FlightSafety International, the world's leading pilot training organization.

Buzz Las Vegas by night and Martha's Vineyard at dawn with a degree of photo-realism that only satellite imaging makes possible. Soar over New York, Paris, Tokyo and other cities with more detailed 3D rendering. Improved performance delivers smoother out-the-window views and more immediate response to cockpit controls.

Challenges have been added to test your skills under daunting weather conditions, over new terrain, in varied aircraft. Fly in the face of Mother Nature as you shoot an instrument approach into the fog. Climb over the Alps through rapidly shifting winds, turbulence and changing visibility. Blow the skirts up on the Statue of Liberty.

To find out even more about Microsoft Flight Simulator for Windows 95, visit our Web site at www.microsoft.com/games/fltsim/

Microsoft

Where do you want to go today?™

Expansion Pack with southern California scenery, challenges and adventures available soon.

Where should I focus my guns on the Net? What's on the CD-ROM and how do I use it? What's coming up next month?

What's Up Online?

All hired guns are not created equal. Get full dossiers on the LANCEMATES in MECHWARRIOR 2: MERCENARIES, and don't waste precious C-bills.

You'll also see an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at the making of THE LAST EXPRESS, Jordan Mechner's first game since Prince of Persia 2.

Speak your mind in our Question of the Month: What constitutes "adult content" in a game? Do you want more games with mature themes? How should game companies handle it?

http://www.zdnet.com/gaming

Plus: sneak previews, reviews, strategies and more.

What's On The CD?

If the serious drought in good role-playing games has you thirsting for some classic adventures, you'll be pleased to know that Bethesda Softworks has answered the call with DAGGERFALL. For those who prefer a realistic setting for your gaming experience, try out the next heir in the superb LINKS lineup, Links LS. In this *CGW* exclusive, you can play nine holes, with or against the pros, at the beautifully rendered Latrobe Golf Course. If golf sounds just a little too relaxed for the excitement seekers in our midst, test your mettle in a 'mech with 7th Level's G-NOME, or POWER DOLLS by Megatech Software. If you lust for good-humored adventure, watch the puns fly in Sierra's LEISURE SUIT LARRY 7—not suited for children or the weak of heart! Or for the more dramatically inclined, SegaSoft's OBSIDIAN promises to be an adventure in obscurity and darkness. Fans of the Apache Helicopter sim, by Interactive Magic, strap yourself into the cockpit and enjoy the sequel, HIND (reviewed in this issue). Hind is the best combat helicopter from the Eastern Bloc. These and many more playable demos and teasers of games to come, are all on the disc.

How Do I Use It?

If you have Windows 95, installation is simple: The CD is Autoplay enabled—just lock-n-load. Otherwise, from Windows 3.x, select Run from the Program Manager menu, and type "D:\RUN ME" (where D is the letter of your CD-ROM drive) to run it straight from the CD. Then type "D:\INSTALL" to create a CGW program group on your Windows desktop. If you have installed previous

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For back issues send $7 per issue ($8 outside the United States) by check or money order to Back Issues Dep't. Ziff-Davis Publishing Co., P.O. Box 53131, Boulder, CO 80322-3131

Top 10 reasons to play Sister Magpie

#1. When She Says, "Say Your Prayers Sucka" She Really Means It!

#2 Offers express E-ticket rides to the Pearly Gates

#3 Always there to administer last rites

#4 "Superior Mutha" rotary cannon guarantees 100% contribution rate

#5 Takes the whole celibacy thing seriously (thank God)

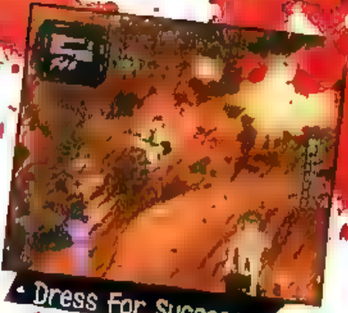
#6 Never once did an infommercial for starving third-world children

#7 Her rosary doubles as a kill counter

#8 Fills you full of holiness

#9 Non-denominational: happily exterminates all God's children

#10 Doesn't sell flowers at the airport or bring signs to football games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• Play With Fire

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versions of the CG-ROM, this disc will use the program group already on your desktop.

How Do I Play The Demos?

To view the demos, first click on Editors' Hot Picks or Product Demos. Next, click on your favorite genre: Action, Adventure, Simulations, Sports or Strategy. Then click on the title of interest. Each demo has its own instructions for installation.

How Do I Get The Patch Files?

Click on Patches under the CGW Features, and then read the text window which has instructions on copying the files to your hard drive. You can also access the patches from a DOS prompt by typing "D:\PATCHES" (where D: is the letter of your CD ROM drive) and copying them directly from there to your hard drive. We strongly recommend that you back up any previously saved games before installing a patch, as this may overwrite your existing program.

How Do I Get The CG-ROM?

Newsstand issues come in two flavors: with and without the CD. Each type is clearly marked. If you can't find the version you want in the store you frequent, encourage your retailer to carry it (or subscribe to ensure that you get a CD every month). To subscribe, simply call (303) 665-8930, and specify that you want the CD ROM version.

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GAMES AND GOODIES ON THE CG-ROM

DEMOS AND STUFF	PLATFORM	DIRECTORY	EXECUTABLE
Daggerfall	95/DOS	demos\dagdemo	Install.exe
G-Nome	95	demos\gnome	setup.exe
Hind	95/DOS	demoshinddemo	HInstall.exe
Leisure Suit Larry 7	Dos/Win/95	sierra	autoplay.exe
Links LS	95/Win	demos\links	Win95: setup.exe, Win3.x: Install.exe
M.A.X.	DOS	demos\max	install.exe
Magic The Gathering: Battlemage	Win	demos\magic	magic.mov
Obsidian	95	demos\obsidian	Install.exe
Power Dolls	DOS/95	pdolls	install.exe
Rex Blade	DOS	demos\rexblade	install.bat
Solid Ice	DOS	demos\icedemo	install.exe
Spider Man	DOS	sixdemo	setup.exe
Westworld 2000	95	ww	setup.exe
Quake Cheats & Hacks: November	n/a	via CD interface	
Quake Cheats & Hacks: December	n/a	via CD interface	
Paintshop Pro	Win/95	demos\quake\psp311 and psp41	.zip file
MedDle	DOS	demos\quake\meddle16	.zip file
Quakeme	Win	demos\quake\quakeme2 and quakme22	.zip file
Winpack	Win	demos\quake\winpak12	.zip file
Quake C Compiler	DOS	demos\quake\qcc	.zip file
Breeze Level Editor	Win	demos\quake\bsp44a	.zip file

COMING NEXT MONTH

1001 GAMING CHEATS

Can't beat 'em? Cheat 'em! Clobber your opponents with cheats for nearly every kind of game. Our comprehensive cheat guide for single- and multiplayer games will put you way over the top.

In February Loyd Case will build a Ferrari rig on a Yugo budget in the third part of our Ultimate Game Machine series.

THE ULTIMATE GAME MACHINE PART III

Also watch for our exclusive Sneak Preview of [illegible] Survivor, Westwood's hot new [illegible] and goodies like Internet [illegible].

HOW DO WE RATE?

★★★★★

Outstanding: The rare game that gets it all right. The graphics, sound, and gameplay come together to form a Transcendent Gaming Experience. Our strongest buying recommendation.

★★★★

Very Good: A high quality game that succeeds in many areas. May have minor problems, but is still worth your money, especially if you're interested in the subject matter or genre.

★★★

Average: A mixed bag. Can be a game that reaches for the stars, but falls short in several ways. Can also be a game that does what it does well, but lacks flair or originality.

★★

Weak: A game with serious problems. Usually buggy, seriously lacking in play value, or just a poorly conceived game design—you should think long and hard before buying it.

★

Abysmal: The rare game that gets it all wrong. This is reserved for those products so buggy, ill-conceived or valueless that you wonder why they were ever released in the first place.

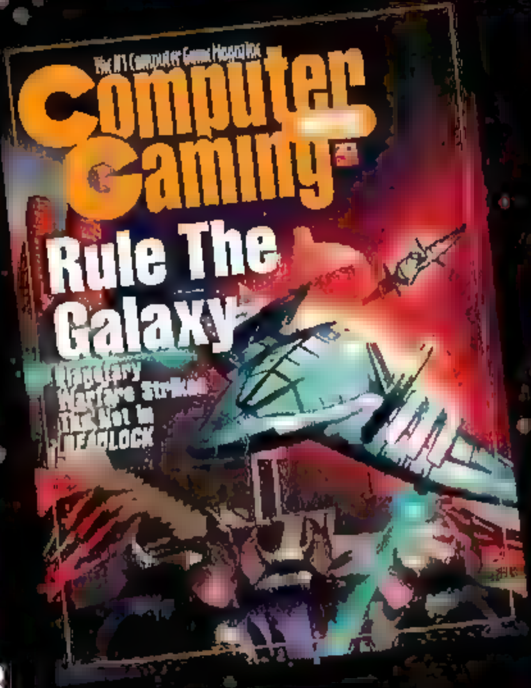
Hot Reviews For January

Destiny
Eradicator
Syndicate Wars
Steel Panthers II
Flashpoint Korea
NCAA Basketball
US Navy Fighters 97
You Don't Know Jack 2
Heroes of Might & Magic II
Flight Simulator for Win 95

Strategies

Close Combat
Toonstruck
Nind

(All articles subject to change if we develop a jones for a new release.)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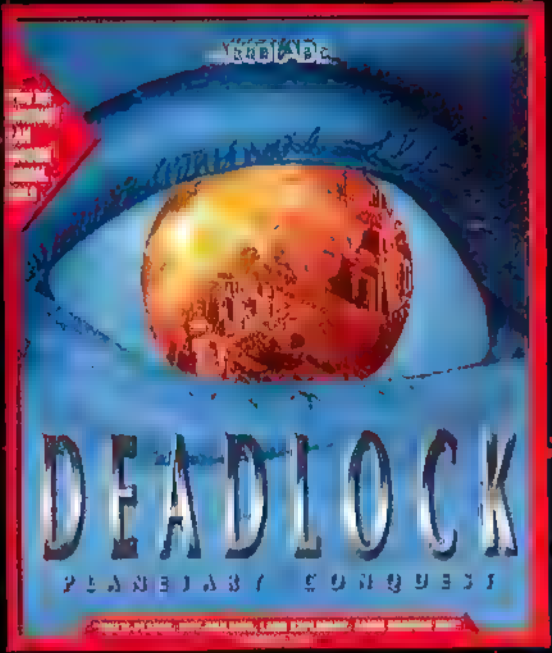
Rule The Galaxy
Planetary Warfare Strikes The Net in DEADLOCK


ACCOLADE
DEADLOCK
PLANETARY CONQUEST

STUDIO 3DO
KILLING TIME
RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

PC THAT'S NOT EXACTLY PC
STUDIO 3DO

JOHNNY WILSON

Custom Levels And Scenarios Under Siege

Copyright Wars Could Cost Gamers The Right To Build Their Own

We were all set to master our CG ROM, and we were very excited. The cover bag advertised a DARK FORCES editor that gamers could use to create levels for the best-selling action game. We had permission from the author of the editor and we didn't think anything could stop us. But a legal expert did just that. He pointed out that we not only needed the permission of the author of the software that allowed you to create the new levels and characters, but we needed LucasArts' permission, as well.

We protested, "How is that any different than when a magazine publishes a macro for a specialized kind of spreadsheet or a template/wizard for a word processor?" The expert on intellectual property informed us that because the editor was going to allow our readers to modify copyrighted *Star Wars* characters and environments, we would be considered accomplices should any of those using the editor ever be brought to court. Since Lucas-Arts was unwilling to give us permission to publish the editor, we opted to change our CG-ROM rather than go to court.

Our legal eagle felt that the original publisher stood to lose out. For example, if a gamer hacked Darth Vader and put him in the Death Star smoking a doobie or had the commander of the Death Star appearing in drag, LucasArts could claim that their intellectual properties were being devalued. After all, how could anyone fear a stoned Darth Vader or an enemy commander in a dress? Part of the mystique would be gone.

We felt that the legal opinion was overly cautious, and wondered among ourselves whether we had been too cowardly in not publishing the editor. So what happened in the next two months? Not one, but *two* legal actions would underscore the issue. The GT Interactive suits over Sierra's TOTAL MELTDOWN and Micro Star's NUKE IT took place over almost exactly the same issue. GTI felt that the existence of those two add-on products devalued the franchise because the levels were not well enough designed and because their intellectual property in characterization, look, and monsters was being used without compensation. Ken Williams of Sierra contended that selling levels built with an editor that is given with a game is tantamount to selling digital art created with a paint program.

> “The attack on copyright threatens your creative rights, too!”

Williams' argument is fairly interesting because it touches on some issues faced by Electronic Arts in the early days of computer games. In the days when most games were 2D instead of 3D, most game art was designed using Electronic Arts' DELUXE PAINT line of products. Game companies used DELUXE PAINT and its offspring as toolsets in building games. If EA had received royalties from every game that used DELUXE PAINT, it would be to the games industry what Microsoft is to the computer industry as a whole. Yet it did not. Early decisions concluded that EA was sufficiently reimbursed for its actions when companies purchased the DELUXE PAINT products as software tools.

For gamers, such legal actions are ominous. We think that products which allow gamers to customize and expand/redesign games are far more interesting than those which don't allow such customization. You may never build a new scenario, hack a character's look, or design a new game map, but if you are like most of us, you like the idea that you might do one of those "when you get enough time." Also, if you're like us, you appreciate the fact that someone else may have designed something new and interesting that you can download to expand the game you purchased. Yet the possibility that construction sets or editors will become standard features in computer games is now under siege.

In fact, copyright is under siege, period. Phone companies, consumer electronics manufacturers, educational institutions, and some well-meaning activist groups are actively trying to exclude computer transmission and/or manipulation of copyrighted materials from both ongoing discussions regarding the establishment of uniform state laws on copyright and a new national Copyright Protection Act. They are also using their sizable lobbyist clout to attempt to discourage the Clinton administration from participating in the Geneva Conference for Transmission Rights.

The telephone companies and consumer electronics manufacturers would like for copyrights on

digital materials to simply go away. Why? So that the former will not have to police transmissions of digital information and so that the latter don't have to deal with issues related to individual copying and proliferation of intellectual properties (i.e., video and computer game piracy). The stakes are high. With Brazil, Argentina, Singapore, Malaysia, and China adding fiber optic lines at a very fast rate, illicit transmission of copyrighted property could mushroom globally.

The opponents of including digitally transmitted and manipulated intellectual properties within the protection of new copyright legislation suggest that encryption is a better tool in discouraging copyright violation than legislation. Such a solution is both naive and annoying. It is naive since every computer gamer who has been around for more than a few years knows that no encryption scheme is perfect. For every code, there is a cracker. It is annoying because companies deprived of legal protection for their intellectual properties will have to protect their code in such a way that gamers won't be able to modify maps and levels, edit databases for classic and popular athletic teams, create new weapons and resources, and develop new missions and scenarios.

> **“Encryption will mean you won't be able to modify maps, create new weapons, or develop new missions and scenarios.”**

Companies who have just begun to provide editors and construction sets for their games will be forced to remove them or lose any semblance of protection for their properties. They will have to restrict access to all parts of the code by whatever frustrating encryption scheme they can devise, and they will be forced to crack down on well-meaning hackers who make unauthorized editors and utilities.

Cicero once said, "*Silent leges inter arma*." Literally, that would mean, "Between arms (i.e., during war), the laws are silent." Metaphorically, it means, "Without any jurisdiction, victims of injustice have no place to appeal for justice." A computer game industry with no hope of copyright protection will be unable to sustain itself in the long run, and computer gamers will lose out on customizable games in the short run. The attack on copyright is an attack on *your* creative rights, too!

So if you value the editors and construction sets that enable you to really turn their games into your games, you need to stand up for them. Make sure your congresspersons know that you support the Clinton administration's participation in the upcoming Geneva Conference. Also, e-mail your support for participation in this conference to the White House. Finally, make sure that whenever you register your computer games with the manufacturer you commend them when they include customizing options and complain to them when they don't.

Like many privileges in life, the opportunity to customize games is dependent upon communicating your feelings. If you snooze on this one, you could lose for a long time to come.

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SOFTBANK ZIFF-DAVIS

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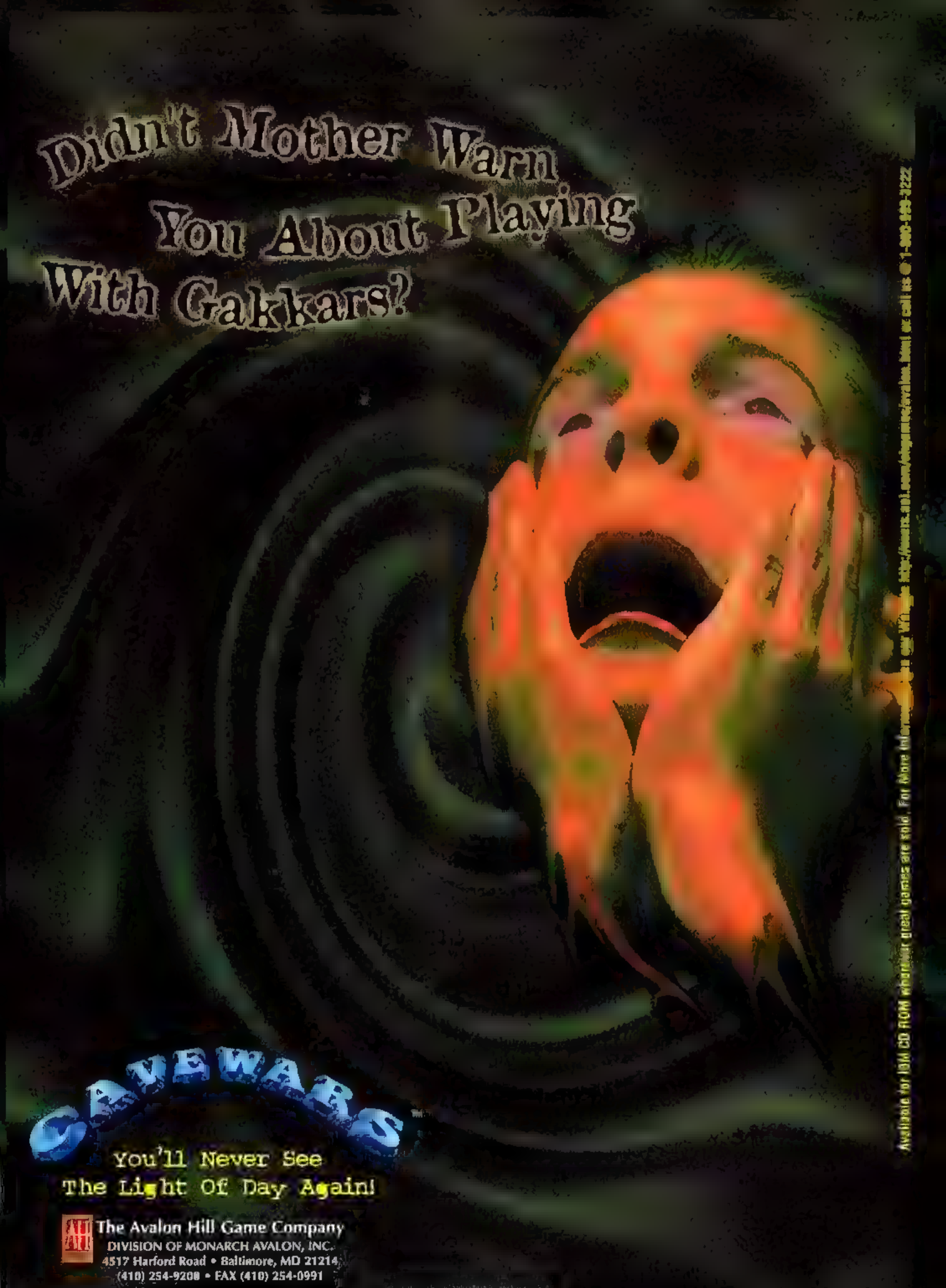
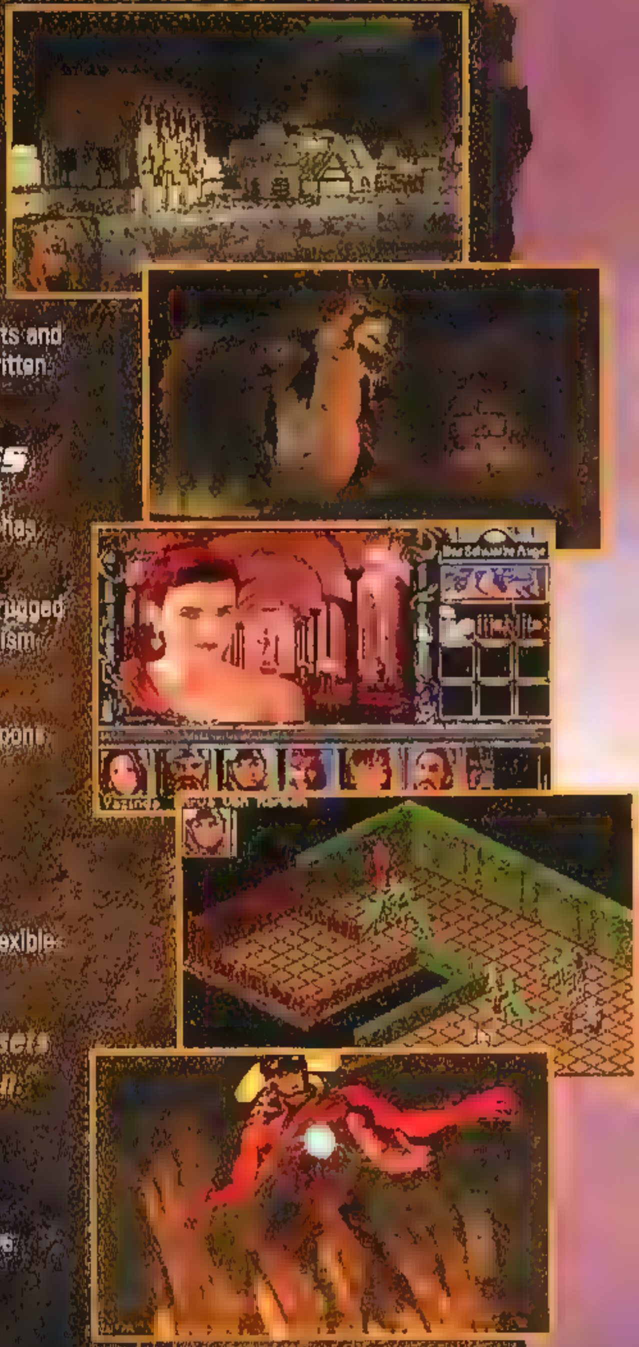


REALMS™
OF ARKANIA

Shadows OVER RIVA

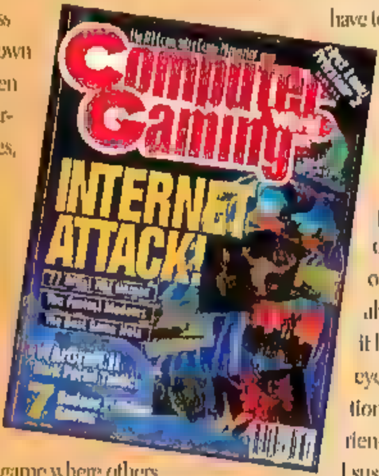


LETTER OF THE MONTH

SOLITARY ALIGNMENT

It seems that with each new issue of CGW I'm seeing more and more coverage about the joys of online gaming. I wonder if I speak for the silent majority when I confess that it will probably be a long, long time before I attempt to play an online game. In fairness, maybe it's just because I don't understand well enough yet how they work, and I'm hoping you can help me out here.

When I play a PC game, I want to be able to progress my way through it at my own pace: reading a well written manual, learning the interface, figuring out strategies, solving situations and enjoying the rewards for doing so. If I leave a game for any period of time, I want the comfort of knowing that when I return to the game, everything will be exactly as I left it.



If I log onto an online game where others ahead of me already know all the tricks (or even just a few of the tricks), wouldn't I be quickly and repeatedly killed? Do I have to find a group of players who are at the same skill level as me? Even if I do, what if I only play for two hours but they play for 24 hours straight? Do I have to play for endless hours in order to become king of the castle?

It's this timing thing that confuses me. For instance, if I log onto a real-time strategy game that, for other players, is already in progress, won't the resources already be used up? Even if they started just five minutes ahead of me, how would you ever make up the tactical advantage that they would already have gained? Or if the game is turn-based, what if I only want to play for two hours per day, but my opponents want to play for six or eight?

If I log onto an RPG that's already in progress, how do I find anything to do? What if I go on a quest to slay a dragon, but someone else out there gets to the dragon just five minutes before me? Is the dragon somehow magically there for both of us to kill or do I have to kick my toe in the dirt, go "ah shucks," and wander off to find something else to do?

Whatever the particular game objective may be, if other players are always beating me to it because of faster eye-hand coordination, more game experience, or lack of sleep, I suspect I'll soon be back in my cave playing happily by myself against a well programmed AI that's intelligent, but fun to defeat.

Ken Pritchard
via the Internet

You're asking the same questions that a lot of folks are asking. First off, many online games do have "vultures," experienced players who hang around the spots where new players pop into the games and kill the new players. In Meridian 59, the new online role-playing world from 3DO, characters who kill other players are marked by having their names appear in red. There are times when these characters are hunted down by other characters and killed in vigilante actions. Other games build safe areas for new pilots, adventurers, explorers or competitors to get used to the game. Some games, like Air Warrior, give you an off-line tutorial where you can play it out of the box.

As for role-playing games specifically, the worlds are dynamic. The good news is that you probably won't have to deal with the dragon decision. In Gemstone III, for example, sysops as characters or experienced characters will often take you on a guided tour and make sure that you get into the center of the action. The same is true in the text game Legends of Future Past and the science fiction trading game Federation II. In Modus Operandi, a mystery game, your fear is right on target. There, whoever finds the item or person first gets the points and it is hard for a new player to get started. However, these worlds are dynamic. They aren't the same when you come back to them.

With regard to strategy games, these are played by mutual consent at a given start time with a given set of rules. Games such as Harpoon Online on the ARIES network, Sniper! on CompuServe, Operation Market-Garden on MPG-Net, Chaos Overlords on MPlayer or Panzer General Online on TEN usually have a conference room where you can meet opponents and establish ground rules before beginning a game.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

My friends and I love Dungeons and Dragons and various other role-playing games. We make games of our own all the time, but we never play them. We all agree that if we could put them on our PCs that we would play them. So, could you please send me some information on which game creation system would be the best for making RPGs and strategy games, where to get it, how much it costs and whether an amateur can use it?

K.M. Rodgers
Rialto, CA

We've received several such inquiries in recent weeks. For building pen-and-paper adventures, the new

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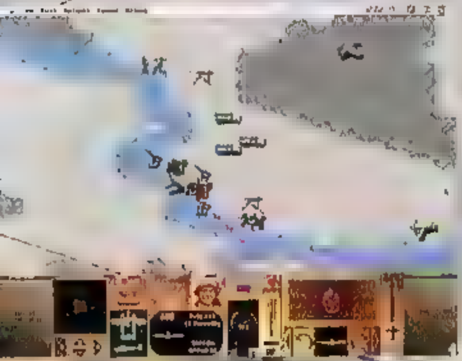

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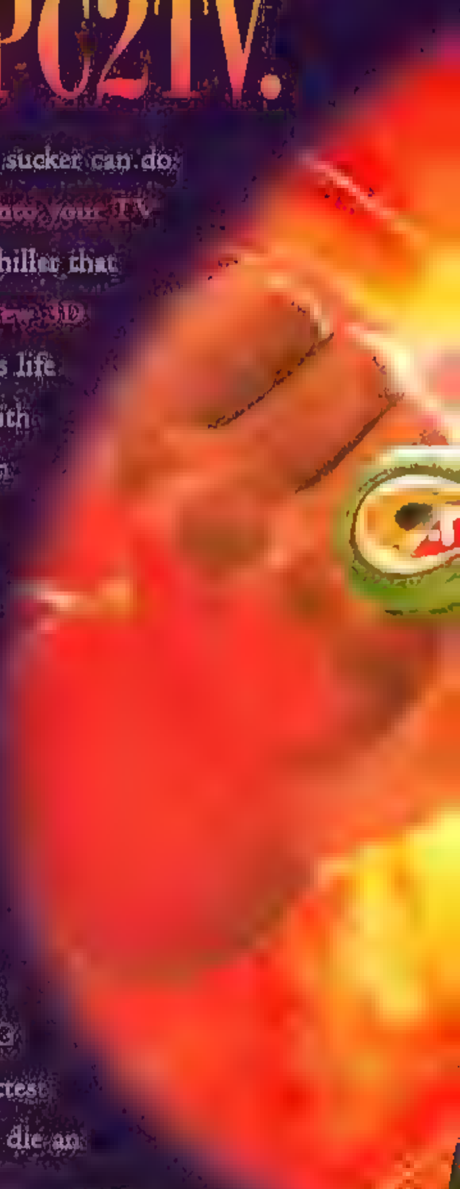
CIRCLE READER SERVICE #168

3 OUT OF 4 GAME CHARACTERS SURVEYED

would rather crush and destroy you while playing on a PC with

ATI 3D XPRESSION+ PC2TV.



And that's just because that one last game goon hasn't seen what this sucker can do. How the ATI 3D XPRESSION+ PC2TV™ lets you plug your PC into your TV (in addition to your monitor) for the ultimate big-screen spine-chiller that blows away those game consoles once and for all. Or how ATI's new 3D accelerator technology breathes life into everything on your screen. With face-blasting speed, butter-smooth detail and 65,000 crazy colors. All because we build more features right onto the board than Matrox, Diamond or anyone else. Really cool stuff like Gouraud shading, bi-linear filtering, perspective-correct texture mapping and fog effects. Which, as we all know, means scarier realism and faster response than dad's Porsche flat out on the freeway. You also get total game acceleration in 3D and 2D with Direct3D and DirectDraw support for Windows 95, fast DOS performance and jaggy-free, full-screen, full-motion TV-quality MPEG video playback. Plus you get the ATI Software Superpak with the hottest 3D games and 3D Web Browser software absolutely free. So why die an ordinary death when it's so much more fun getting dusted with the new ATI 3D XPRESSION+ PC2TV graphics accelerator upgrade. Available in 2MB or 4MB versions. See it now at your dealer. Call us at 905 882-2600 (press 2 for faxback). Or check out all the details at [illegible]

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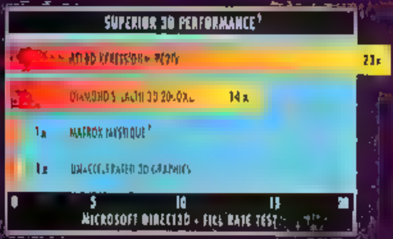
1600x1200 (hi)	●		
3D Texturing (Bi-linear)	●		●
Smooth Video Scaling	●	●	
Price	$199 (2MB)	$219	$ 99



Also in systems from IBM, NEC, Sony, and Acer
NOW YOU SEE IT.™

AD&D Core Rules set is ideal (available direct from TSR). For building adventures on the computer, you will need to order an old copy of Unlimited Adventures from SSI (essentially, the editing tools for their AD&D series) or an old copy of The Bard's Tale Construction Set from Interplay (the editing tools for Bard's Tale III and Wasteland). Both can be used by amateurs. If you merely want to try your hand at text adventures, search for Adventure Game Construction Kit on the Internet. Many gamers are still building text games using this system and distributing them free on the Internet.

Those who want to build their own arcade games may try their hands at Klik 'n Play from Maxis. Those who want to build their own flight sims should check out Flight Sim Toolkit from Eidos. Also, those who want to try their hand at strategy games should use the scenario editors in Steel Panthers (I and II), as well as Age of Rifles.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT?

I think your reviewers often spend too much time criticizing graphics. No one wants to play games with CGA graphics anymore, but no one makes 'em that way, and graphics only enhance what a good game has already simulated in the player's brain. As to Network play, although Internet play may eventually change this, most gamers still don't have access to LAN or IPX networks. While Network ability no doubt makes working in a networked office more fun, it's meaningless for 95% of PC gamers. Modem play does make a difference. But game profiles should indicate if each network user needs their own copy of the game.

I think you spend too much time writing about games that aren't available yet. It should be really special to get advance notice! It's become routine to scoop software that is months away from release, sometimes never to be released. While it's fun to get tantalizing snips on them, 3-4 page articles are not useful. A lot of computer users wait until the inevitable patches are released before they buy games, yet you refer to games that are just maturing as if they were last week's pizza in the fridge. This kind of premature review and disposal just feeds the likewise premature release of games. Much of their size is graphics and sound. The problem is that games are released without any real serious beta testing, because the marketing department says so.

Hey! Most gamers are still using 486s, and most games still work fine on them. If a game is really gonna' be a killer, then they should write it in assembly and quit telling everyone to buy a new system every six months.

Finally, although I still love CGW, I hate you for taking away my monthly reader's poll card! Give it back to us! OK, so some people lied on the cards. Do it like the Olympics and take away the high and low scores. Don't drift away from what made CGW interesting and survive this long. I still miss "Taking A Peek."

Walt Huber
Atwater, CA

Other than that, Mr Dole, how'd you like the election? The truth is that we wouldn't write about graphics and upcoming games if our readers didn't demand it. They also want to know about the most powerful machines available and the most amazing programs with which to show off those machines. As for "Taking A Peek," it still exists as "On The Shelf." We changed the name because the demise of 6502 programming reduced overall gamer awareness of Peek and Poke commands. For once, we retired a pun before it became totally obscure. We also believe that the current CGW Poll is more statistically reliable than the former method. However, we are always listening and your criticism does fuel discussion. As for your contention that the networking coverage was irrelevant, check out the following counterpoint.

BUILT HIS OWN

Thank you, thank you, thank you for your September '96 Network Gaming article. It opened my eyes to the options out there, and also got rid of any excuse I had for linking my server (that I'm "borrowing" from my dad's office, and that I use for my PC. Try it someday) and my notebook via LAN. My dad also let me install one in another computer he brought home, and now, I finally got to play Duke, Warcraft 2, Quake and the venerable DOOM with two or three players. With your help, my network installed without a hitch, and now I'm gaming like I've never gamed before.

Thomas Edgar
via the Internet

YOU ARE CORRECT, SIR

I've been a big fan of your magazine since I saw my first ish, #113 (Dec. '93). I've had a subscription to your magazine for two years now, and I consider it to be the best mag on the market by far, and definitely the most mature. Sometimes you can be a little harsh (esp. on RPGs), but I know you're never candy-coating a poor game.

I received issue #148 two weeks ago. On the 150 best games of all time, I didn't notice until the third time I read it that you rated Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy as #42. You didn't comment there on the connection to the Ultimate Answer to Life, the Universe, and Everything. I'm a big fan of the books (and the text adventure, I had an Apple II for many years), and I got a big laugh out of your placement.

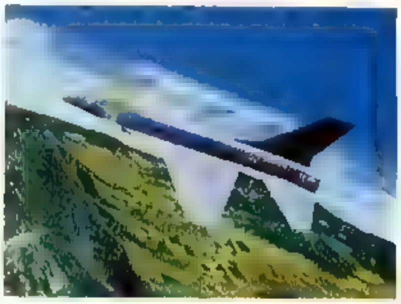
Keep up the fantastic work.

Matt Picioccio
via the Internet

KOREAN WARP

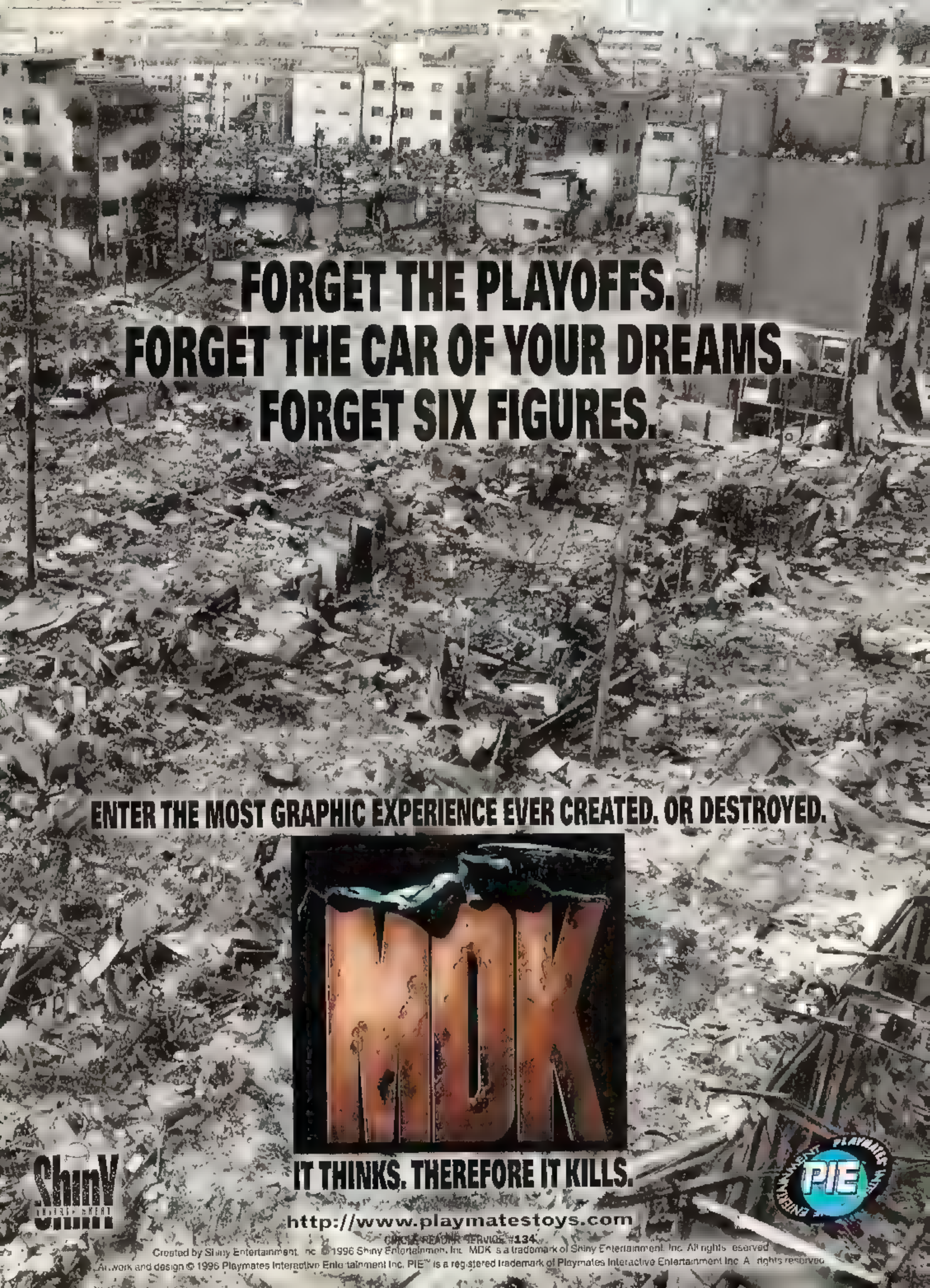
Perhaps the most intriguing news in your August issue was the statement that the designers of Falcon 4.0 plan to "model a million square miles of Korean terrain." Since the combined area of North and South Korea is just under 86,000 square miles, it would be interesting to know how they plan to do that.

Brian A. Libby
Faribault, MN



THINKING BIG MicroProse plans to model 1,000,000 square miles of terrain in Falcon 4.0. Korea wishes it was that big.

Hmm! The numbers seemed right when we calculated them with that early Pentium chip.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Westwood's Plan To Conquer The World

The Makers Of COMMAND & CONQUER Prepare New Assault With Two New C&C Games And A LANDS OF LORE Sequel

Westwood Studios has lots in store for the coming year, so we put an extra hamster on the wheel of our VW Van and scurried east to Las Vegas to check on the company's progress. (The worst thing about the trip, other than no gambling: no time to stop at the In-n Out Burger.)

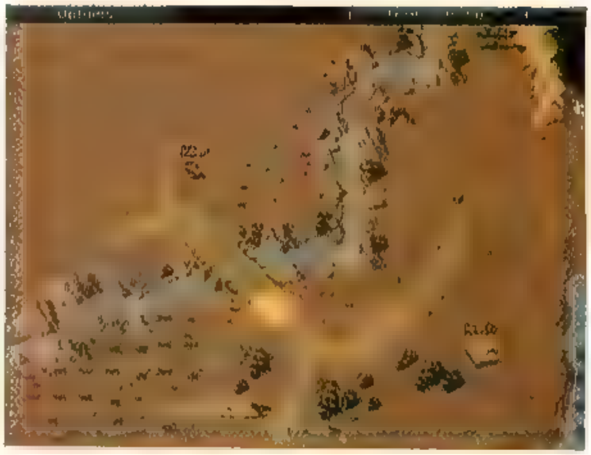
By the time you read this, you could be knee-deep in C&C: RED ALERT, but what do you do when you're done beating back Stalin? The next COMMAND & CONQUER game out will be SOLE SURVIVOR, a pure Internet game that has promising potential. We were able to play an early version of the game and before we knew it, we were both hooked. Unlike the other C&C games, you don't command an army, but only a single unit. The point of the game is to be the last unit surviving, hence the game's title.

You can pick any one vehicle from COMMAND & CONQUER though we gravitated to the lumbering but powerful Mammoth Tank or the fast-but-scrawny Recon Bike in our deathmatches. Theoretically, dozens of people can play in a single game, and if you don't have enough human players, the computer can always spawn several AI units and play with you.

You can choose from a number of new C&C maps, with power-up crates peppered about the level. Thankfully, the contents and the placements of the crates are randomized so no one can memorize the map and monopolize the power-ups.

The interface for playing was very familiar, as both the look and hot key commands are straight ports from the C&C engine. The graphics are SVGA and the C&C shroud is still in effect (and one of the power-ups will reshroud the map).

C&C: SOLE SURVIVOR will be an Internet-only game playable over Westwood Chat. However,



FILET OF SOLE There are many ways to die in C&C: SOLE SURVIVOR. Fortunately, there are as many ways to kill.

ON THE SHELF

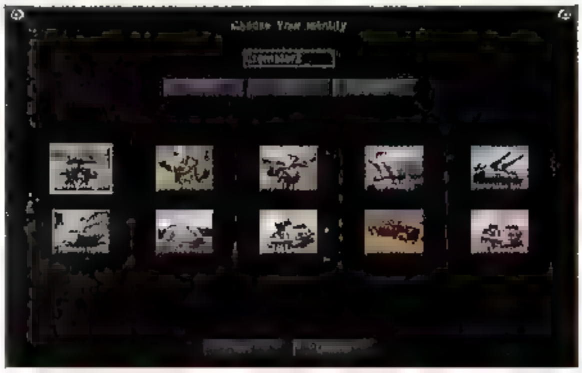
Here are some of the hottest products on the market, as well as the ones that frankly ain't so hot. Reviews for most are coming soon.

CIRCLE OF BLOOD

Paris, city of lights and love. George Stobbart sits at a Bistro sipping his cafe au lait, and watching the world go by. Sound peaceful? When a maniacal clown with a briefcase dashes away from the Bistro moments before the place explodes, you know you're in for an interesting experience.

As Stobbart, you'll play detective, trying to unravel the mystery behind the clown and the bombing. When you discover a manuscript of the ancient Knights Templar, the mystery takes on a deeper significance.

The puzzles in CIRCLE OF BLOOD are



AWAITING ORDERS SOLE SURVIVOR lets you choose among several familiar C&C units, and then seek new meat on the Internet.

neither a pricing plan nor the next beta testing has been announced yet. Even at this admittedly early stage, SOLE SURVIVOR looks and plays very nicely. Playing only a single unit is a change of pace, but it's definitely every bit as fun.

Of course, the C&C game everyone is waiting for is COMMAND & CONQUER 2: TIBERIAN SUN. We did manage to weasel a few morsels of information from Westwood. C&C2 will have a totally new engine and will return to the GDI versus NOD storyline, taking place a number of years after COMMAND & CONQUER. Westwood is currently in the early stages of development for this game, which they plan to release near Christmas, 1997. We're waiting for this game as eagerly as you are, and we'll reveal more details as they surface.

Westwood is also getting ready to release the next installment of its epic RPG, LANDS OF LORE: GUARDIANS OF DESTINY. After three years of work, it looks like it's finally going to ship during the first quarter of 1997. As in the first game, LOL2 is more of an adventure/RPG hybrid than a straight-up RPG, with a greater emphasis on exploration and puzzle solving than on character generation and advancement. You assume the role of Luther, son of Scotia, the evil sorceress from LOL1. As the story opens, Scotia has put a curse on you that makes you change shapes at random, to a small lizard and a giant ogre. You'll need to master the power of this curse before you can go on to defeat the dead god Belial who threatens The Lands. We spent a few hours with the game, and can tell you that with beautiful first person 3D SVGA graphics, a massive world ranging from underground caves to jungle thickets, and novel and exciting magic and combat, this has the potential to be one of the big RPGs of the year.

Finally, there's BLADE RUNNER. Westwood isn't saying much about this one yet, but what we do know is that it takes place in the same universe of the film, but you will *not* be playing the Harrison Ford character. We looked at some early screens as well as storyboards for later levels; Westwood is definitely capturing the dark atmosphere of the film. We'll keep you posted as we learn more. *—Elliott Chin and Jeff Green*

LORE PLAY Prepare to save The Lands again in Westwood's upcoming LANDS OF LORE: GUARDIANS OF DESTINY.

standard fare, and while not as outright funny as TOONSTRUCK, the game maintains its own level of humor. What really makes this a good adventure game is the beautiful animation by Don Bluth Studios alumni, and a strong (not sappy, as in most other animated games) plot to boot. *—T. Nguyen*

Virgin/Revolution Studios, (800)874-4607

PC CD-ROM

Reader Service # 301

DESTINY

This Civ clone has an abundance of detail, and purports to examine both economic growth and expansion throughout human history. Unfortunately, DESTINY fails to muster much in the way of either realism or enjoyment. The graphics are far below industry standards, to the point where they distract considerably from game play. The 3D perspective is certainly innovative, but I have to question its usefulness for a strategy game, particularly when viewing the map and understanding terrain is so important.

The combat aspects of the game are weak, especially in real-time mode, and many of the generic "quickie" battles are hopelessly one sided. There appears to be little distinction between the computer's strategy in different eras, which can lead to some interesting results, although I don't think there were too many "overrun" attacks in the real battle of Jutland. Our tactical advice? Stay away. *—T. Carter*

Interactive Magic, (800) 789-1534

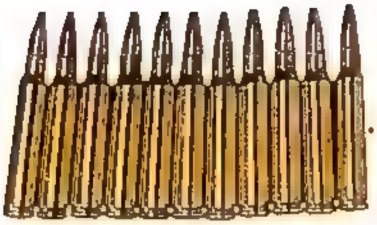
PC CD ROM

Reader Service # 302

FLASHPOINT: KOREA

FLASHPOINT: KOREA is the first add on for Jane's Combat Simulations' benchmark title, AH-64D LONGBOW. Along with a welcome change of scenery for the new campaign and single missions, FPK boasts improvements that make it far more than a mere mission disk, including a realistic simulation of the copilot/gunner position, better avionics modeling, and improved AI for your wingman and the enemy.

continued on page 40 ▸▸▸



Go where no man
has ever come
[illegible]
[illegible]

If the game graphics
don't blow you away
one of these w[illegible]

Treasure seeking,
puzzle solving, alligator
wrestling, and still time
[illegible]

SOMETIMES,
HAVING A

Sometimes, you also need guts. Or a brain. Or quick

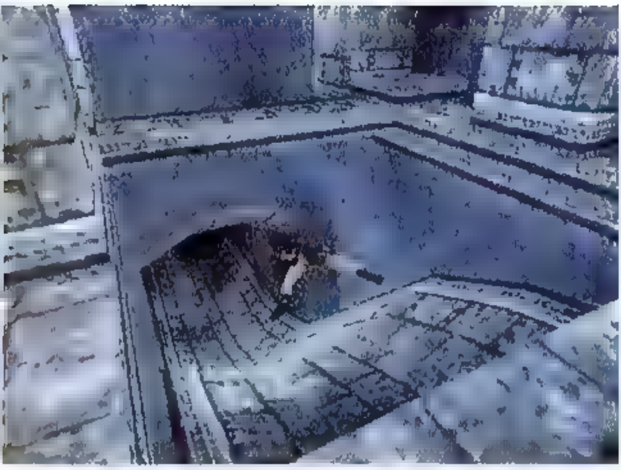
feet. Other times, you need all of the above plus

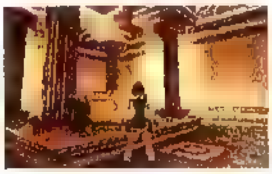
grenades, a shotgun and a matching pai

of nine millimeters. Such is your fate

when you control Lara Croft, heroine

heartthrob of Tomb Raider





The Quakelet Boom

4 Companies Ride The Boomstick Wave With QUAKE's Engine

Since QUAKE's release, there's been a whole lotta shakin' goin' on in the suburbs of Dallas, TX. Three new game companies formed within rocket-launching range of rivals id Software (DOOM, QUAKE) and Apogee/3D Realms (DUKE NUKEM 3D). Interestingly, the snot-nosed upstarts moving in on their turf aren't snot-nosed at all—they're alumni from one or both companies.

We decided to get a closer look at what's boiling up from QUAKE's rubble.

Photo by V. Long

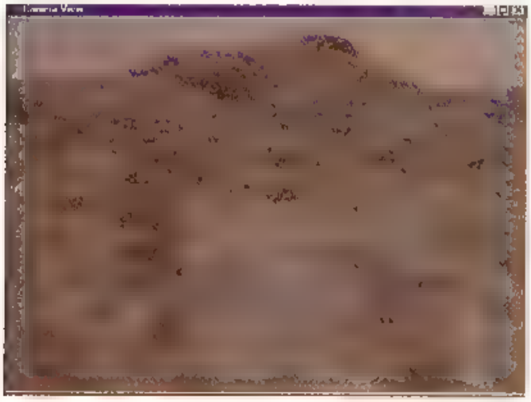
STEREOSCOPIC VISION John Carmack's monitors show the seeds of the next-generation of real-time first-person action gaming.

Id Software: Quake 2

Despite John Romero's departure and Jay Wilbur's retirement, it's business as usual at id Software, the notorious creators of WOLFENSTEIN 3D, DOOM, and QUAKE. For 1997, id will continue to enhance QUAKE, as well as research next generation technology.

John Cash and Sandy Peterson showed *CGW* a slew of QUAKE 2 play things undergoing testing. Many were inspired by the QUAKE C mods circulating among QUAKE aficionados, such as the grappling hook, cluster bombs, guided missiles, plastique and flashlights. Among those unique to id are the "Frisbee o' Death," the ominous "Hellcube," and the voracious "Black Hole."

In QUAKE 2, you can also expect to see major improvements to the game's physics, especially the recoil and blasts effects. Repeated pounding, for example, from your 12 gauge boomstick will "walk" the besieged target backwards over a ledge. Particularly gratifying were chunks that spray away from the source of the blast, instead of in an omnidirectional geyser.



NEW GROUND Careening over this landscape, one of Carmack's new experiments, is an impressive treat.

John Carmack showed *CGW* the latest version of QUAKE-WORLD, as well as samples of his research into next generation, first-person 3D technology. He hopes to make future games even more immersive games with outdoor environments, atmospheric effects and volumetric clouds.

QUAKE 2 is scheduled for release mid-1997, or whenever it's ready. id's next generation technology probably won't become available to the public until the end of 1998.

ION Storm!: Strategy, Action And RPG Titles

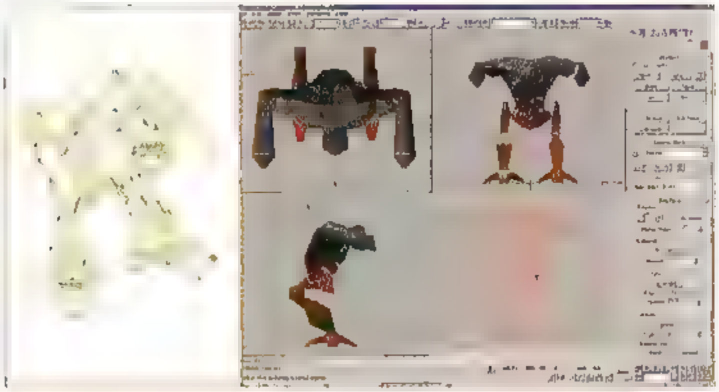
ION Storm! is the official name for John Romero and Tom Hall's new venture. ION has strategy, action, and RPG projects in development.

Todd Porter, who recently left 7th LEVEL, will work on what Romero describes as "a real-time strategy, first person action, weird hybrid of a game, completely hectic and totally hot." Romero hopes to "have it in 3D with a completely simple interface, but with layers of complexity. I want the player to say this is a crucial fire fight and then (be able to) zip over into that Hummer on that hill and fight from the first-person."

Romero wants to "take action games to the next level" by blending in elements from both RPGs and fighting games. He hopes to provide a strong storyline, and team the player with two computer-controlled buddies: "There will be no more 'single play' by yourself." In addition, Romero envisions supplementing the ranged combat popularized by DOOM/QUAKE with the hand to hand combat of VIRTUA FIGHTER. He hopes to reward players' increasing skill with special moves, such as multiple jumps and combination attacks.

IONIC MEN Ex-idling John Romero (left) stands before the house that DOOM built. Tom Hall has worked for both Id and 3D Realms before joining Romero to make games using the QUAKE engine.

ION's highest hopes rest on Hall's 3D RPG, which Hall describes as "a very shocking turbulent story, a roller-coaster of emotion" that incorporates elements from FINAL FANTASY, BATTLEFIELD EARTH, *HitchHiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, and MARIO 64. Hall explains that it's tentatively "centered around a city where all dimensions connect. When the inhabitants see something purple flying by they don't care." The player will be accompanied by two partners, like in SECRET OF MANA and SECRET OF EVERMORE console games.



HE'S THE BOSS Armagon, a part-alien, part-mech monstrosity, will be the last thing you see in Hipnotic's Rift—if you survive that long.

ENTER THE DRAGON When the Dragon appears, it's time to beat feet or burn.

Hipnotic Interactive: The Rift

Hipnotic's birth caused quite a stir in the action game development community in Texas. Several members of 3D Realms—creators of Duke Nukem 3D—defected to form Hipnotic soon after Quake's release. Their first project is the development of a 15-level Quake add-on pack, fittingly entitled The Rift.

The Rift introduces three new weapons. The Laser Cannon and Proximity Bombs will be somewhat familiar to Quake C hackers. However, the Mjolnir is *the* weapon to behold! Charge this massive Norse hammer with enough energy cells, and smash it into the ground. The resulting spray of lightening will fan out and smite nearby targets, which in turn will spew forth more lightening that smites more targets, laying waste to practically everything in sight. BFG, anyone?

Hipnotic also adds three power-ups that bring new twists to game play: the Empathy Shield, the Wetsuit, and the Horn of Conjuring. Three new hellspawn are now present: The Gremlin is a corpse-devouring nuisance with the pesky habit of stealing your weapons and using them against you. The Scourge is a giant scorpion armed with dual nailguns and a stinger-tipped tail. Its ability to strafe makes it a dangerous foe. The cyborg-boss Armagon is your nightmarish reward for clawing your way to the end level.

As if the 3x3x3 onslaught weren't enough, Hipnotic managed to implement rotating objects in spite of naysayers' claims. So, realistic mechanical devices such as drawbridges, trapdoors, and rolling threats ala *Raiders of the Lost Ark* will likely appear in the final version, which should hit retail shelves in early 1997.

After Hipnotic finishes The Rift, they will use the Quake engine to create an all new game of their own design.

PHOTO BY V. LONG

ROGUES These ruffians are creating a Quake pack that'll just kill you, with swinging pendulum blades, electric eels, a Wraith and a Dragon.

Rogue Entertainment: Quake Add-On Pack

A couple strides down the hall from id is Rogue Entertainment, which was formed in December 1994 when its founders split from Cygnus Studios after completing Apogee's Raptor. Rogue jumped into the first-person 3D fray with Strife, an RPG using the Doom engine, and is now developing a yet unnamed add-on pack for Quake.

Like The Rift, Rogue's add-on pack brings a collection of new goodies and ghouls to the party. Some of the new weapons will be familiar to Quake C hackers: multiple rockets and cluster grenades. Rogue's additions include deadlier lava-laced ammunition and a device that launches devastating lightning balls. New power ups including a power shield and anti-gravity belt help you survive.

Rogue's assorted contraptions include massive swinging pendulum blades and quaint river boats. Riding the boats, you may avoid getting zapped by electric eels, but could become a sitting duck for snipers. A particular menace is the airborne Wraith. Disappointed by the mild mannered Scrag in Quake, Rogue created the Wraith with a Vore-like homing attack and Power Shield armor.

The crown jewel is the flying Dragon which Quake sorely lacked. Like a true badass boss, the Dragon is almost unstoppable: If it doesn't instantly flambe you with its napalm breath, it'll whack the grey matter out of your skull with its spiked tail.

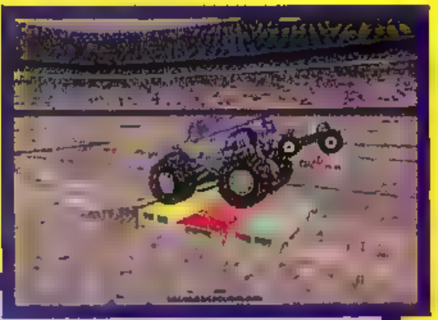
Rogue's add on pack will become available sometime in early 1997. Rogue plans to follow up with its own game based on the Quake engine. -*V. Long*

PHOTO BY V. LONG

THE GREAT UNWASHED Hipnotic challenged their former boss at 3D Realms to wash this truck if The Rift outsells his next title. Get it good and dirty, boys, but don't throw away your buckets.

BIGGER

IS BETTER.



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PRINCE OF PERSIA Creator Back On Track

With THE LAST EXPRESS, Jordan Mechner wraps up a four-year labor-of-love. The designer of two of the best PC action games ever made, PRINCE OF PERSIA 1 and 2, Mechner has been working on his most ambitious project yet, a CD-ROM adventure game called THE LAST EXPRESS. The game is now nearing completion, and Broderbund is slating it for release this March.

Set aboard the Orient Express in July, 1914, THE LAST EXPRESS involves high adventure as the train crosses Europe from Paris to Constantinople. You play an American urgently summoned by a friend to join him on the train at the Gare de l'Est, in Paris. When you arrive, you find that your friend has been murdered. You board anyways, assuming your friend's identity, and set about to uncover the mystery over the course of the three-day trip.

The game plays out in "real time," with conversations and character interactions happening all over the train—regardless of whether you're there or not. Each of the game's 30-odd characters has an independent "life" inside the game; a complex background, behavior, tastes, sympathies, motives and so on. Some of these behaviors have direct influence on the outcome of the game, others do not, yet each character has a reason for being on the train and for acting as they do.

CHARACTER ACTING Jordan Mechner directs actors during the filming of THE LAST EXPRESS.

Depending on how you play, you can take multiple pathways to multiple outcomes. And yet, the game, as technical director Robert Cook points out, "*is* linear. It's on a train on a charted course. Narrative, too. The character logic is controlling the flow, but allowing for the player's freedom at the same time."

Researching the actual Orient Express was no easy task. Books about the train were only marginally helpful, and the idea of actually finding a car from the original train seemed impossible. But when Mechner placed an ad in a European train buff magazine, he hit the jackpot when two old employees of the Gare de l'Est responded.

As Mechner described it, "These two old men told us to meet them at the Gare de l'Est, go to Track number 3, turn left, see a glass door...and enter a door marked 'No Admittance.' It really was like a game," Mechner laughed. "Patrick Ladislav (the 3D art director) and I went down these long dark corridors, and then we were in a dark room facing two ancient men surrounded by boxes."

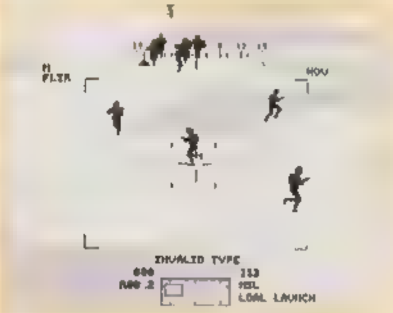
It turned out that the two men had salvaged tons of train records that were about to be thrown out—among them, all the essential ingredients for bringing the 1914 Orient Express back to life: train layouts and blueprints, timetables and manuals, original menus, tickets and more. The employees were also able to serve as "historical debuggers" able to provide more answers to detailed questions that came up while making the game, and they were able to help Mechner track down an actual sleeping car from the 1914 Orient Express that was literally rotting at a train yard in Athens.

Mechner's team photographed and videotaped every inch of this last remaining car and, along with all the other newly discovered objects, set about to create a 3D digital version of the train.

The people on the train are rotoscoped—filmed with live actors and then redrawn frame by frame into 2D cartoon like characters. The decision to do this was made long in advance, partly because the line-drawing appearance of the characters reflect

ON THE SHELF

▸▸▸continued from page 33



Missions are more complex than in LONGBOW because of Korea's terrain and the increased interaction with friendly forces. Enemy units are less static, reacting to your presence by attacking, fleeing, or calling in air support. The resulting environment feels much more alive. *–R. Kim*

Jane's/Origin, (800) 245-4525

PC CD-ROM

Reader Service # 303

SHERLOCK HOLMES: CASE OF THE ROSE TATTOO

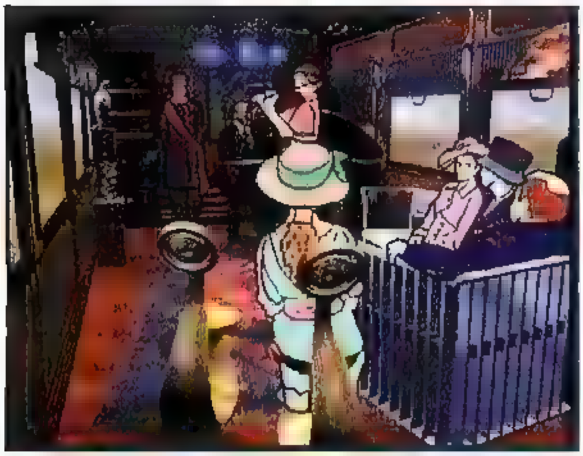
The fog rolls inexorably from the Thames, a perfect camouflage for the seamy underside of Victorian London. Cabs splatter mud on unfortunate passersby, bobbies patrol the streets, and the eerie glow of gaslight gives an almost supernatural cast to the surroundings.

We've all grown up with Sherlock Holmes and his faithful companion, Dr. Watson. CASE OF THE ROSE TATTOO is hardly revolutionary, but it does tap into the Great Detective's charm enough to elicit a smile here, a chuckle there. Like its predecessor, the CASE OF THE SERRATED SCALPEL, this game tries too hard to be an interactive movie. Some may find the lab experiments tedious and the acting less than stellar, but the plot twists, which begin with Mycroft Holmes (Sherlock's smarter brother) being injured in a mysterious accident, are often worth the occasional tedium. The game is indeed afoot. *–T. Coleman*

Electronic Arts,(800) 245-4525

PC and Win 95 CD-ROM

Reader Service # 305



TOONCAR All of these characters were originally filmed before being re-drawn for a cartoon-like, 2D look.

ed the style of the Art Deco period and early European comic books of the same era.

For the film shoot, Mechner, with a background in filmmaking, undertook a project as ambitious as a feature film. The actual shoot took place in 1994, two years into the project. Mechner describes the shoot as being like a military operation; it went on for 19 days, followed by two years of post-production work.

Was it difficult to keep his enthusiasm alive over the past four years? "Keeping the excitement alive was not a problem," he says. "You get some burn-out, but after seeing the first renders of a new area, or the first film...or any of other thrilling moments tend to rejuvenate you. You need one of those every few weeks." Was it worth it? "I have no regrets. But I might not be saying that in six months."

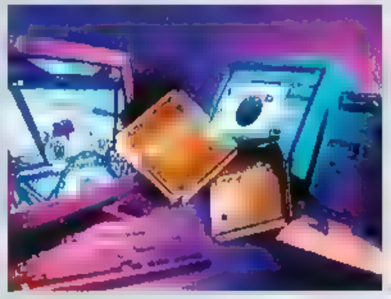
—*Alex Uttermann, Rusel DeMaria and Jeff Green*

CG ON-LINE

For more on this story and a Preview of The Last Express, see CGW's Web site.

On The ViRGE Of Something Better

With over three million ViRGE chips in the market, S3 has almost single-handedly legitimized the market for 3D graphics accelerators. Unfortunately, while the initial ViRGE and ViRGE/VX chips offered a rich feature set, they were on the low end of the 3D performance scale—on faster systems some developers referred to them as "hardware decelerators."



S3 aims to up the performance ante with the upcoming ViRGE/DX and ViRGE/GX chips. The company claims a three fold performance increase over the original ViRGE with the new chips, which would put them in the same league as the current kings of the hill, 3Dfx's Voodoo and Rendition's Vérité.

A faster 170MHz RAMDAC will allow higher resolutions and refresh rates, so you'll be able to take advantage of all that texture memory when running 2D applications as well—allowing 1024x768 resolution with 24-bit color on boards with 4MB of RAM.

The ViRGE/DX uses DRAM memory, and is pin-compatible with the first-generation ViRGE chip, so manufacturers can easily update their current designs. The ViRGE/GX can use faster SDRAM or SGRAM memory, but requires manufacturers to design a new board, so you'll likely see boards based on the DX part first. Prices should be in the same range as current ViRGE boards.

Both chips are software-compatible with the original ViRGE part, so existing titles should see a good performance boost with them. Because many PC makers use S3-based graphics—including Compaq, Dell, HP, and Packard Bell—game developers will be more likely to add 3D support to their games, and that's good news for gamers. Watch for hands-on testing of the new ViRGE chips in an upcoming issue of *CGW*.—*Denny Atkin*

MASTERPILOT

MasterPilot is a replica of an aircraft instrument panel's Multi-Function Display, with functional buttons and room for game-specific templates where the display would usually sit. The aim of this device is to eliminate the need to use the keyboard in flight sims.

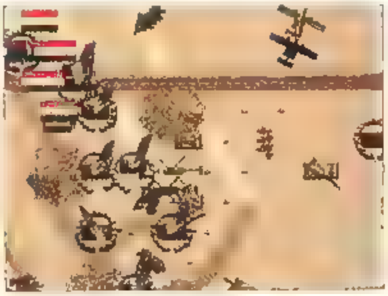
The 32 buttons and the throttle control do indeed work well, for the 30 supported games. Unfortunately, the device is programmable only by replacing a cartridge, so you'll have to wait for QuickShot to issue a cart supporting your favorite new sim. Non-volatile memory and new configs available for download on the web would have been a better idea.

Also, functions are seemingly randomly placed, with "Afterburner" on the left on sim and on the right on the next. This inconsistency keeps you looking at the game template, obviating most of the advantage over just using the keyboard. If QuickShot would revamp this device with programmability and more consistent templates, it could easily be a "Hot" buy. —*D. Atkin*

QuickShot, (408) 263-4005
IBM PC
Reader Service # 307

STEEL PANTHERS II: MODERN BATTLES

To be blunt, STEEL PANTHERS II is a Panzer freak's dream. Not only do you get the increased lethality of modern weaponry, you may also reenact some of the largest–and wildest–armored melees in history. Morale is just as important as hardware in the oddly-named *Chinese Farm*, as the professionalism of the Israeli army is put to



Online Gaming For Less

With AOL's recent changes to its pricing plan, gamers may well notice a substantial drop in their monthly bills. Instead of paying additional surcharges to individual online gaming services, gamers can now have unlimited access to providers, via AOL, for an all-inclusive monthly charge of $19.99. AOL is also offering a lower rate package for lighter uses and a "bring your own access" rate for people who already have an alternative Internet connection.

The new pricing plan comes as a result of AOL's changing revenue model. As the company gears itself more towards advertising, it is essential for them to draw in a wider range of customers. But how will this affect the online gaming services, some of whom currently charge by the hour? From a short term perspective, it may appear that online game providers are losing out. Cullen Couch, Marketing Communications Manager for Aries Online Games, a subsidiary of Kesmai Corporation, disagrees. He believes that the new pricing plan is going to attract more people to Aries: "The more eyeballs we get on our products the better."

In the long term, online game providers hope the deal will prove to be an effective marketing strategy for the online gaming market. And it certainly sounds like good news for gamers–just imagine how many more hours of gaming you'll be able to fit into your budget now. —*C. Panther*

FREE FLIGHT You can now play AIR WARRIOR for no extra cost under AOL's new pricing plan.

PLAYING LATELY?

Here are the games readers are actually blowing the most time with, as opposed to the reader's overall "quality ranking" in the Top 100.

The Top 5 keep their hold on hard drives this month, with CIV II, DUKE NUKEM 3D and WARCRAFT II maintaining Top 3 positions for the sixth consecutive month. QUAKE makes its debut on the chart in seventh place, while STEEL PANTHERS and PANZER GENERAL slip to the bottom of the chart.

You'll no longer find the *CGW* Poll Card bound into the magazine, but check your mail box: We mail a survey to 2,000 randomly-chosen subscribers each month, and we use the results to calculate the Top 100 and Playing Lately each month.

READERS' TOP 10

		Last Month	Months On Chart
1.	**Civilization II** (MicroProse)	1	8
2.	**Duke Nukem 3D** (3D Realms)	2	9
3.	**WarCraft II** (Blizzard)	3	11
4.	**Command and Conquer** (Virgin/Westwood)	4	14
5.	**MechWarrior 2** (Activision)	5	13
6.	**Doom II** (id Software)	7	10
7.	**Quake** (id Software)	-	1
8.	**Heroes of Might and Magic** (New World Computing)	8	13
9.	**Steel Panthers** (SSI)	6	13
10.	**Panzer General** (SSI)	9	22

ON THE SHELF

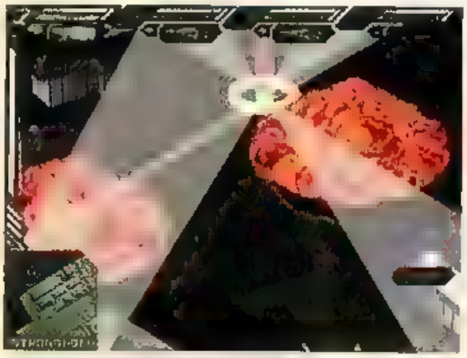
the ultimate test against a determined force of Arab armor. Those used to the static mines of STEEL PANTHERS will have to change their tactics when meeting up with Claymores in the jungles of Vietnam, where Air Cav units bring a whole new dimension to the game engine. Would-be Schwartzkopfs can have a field day in Desert Storm, or tackle hypothetical campaigns in the Middle East, China or Europe (for those needing a NATO vs. Warsaw Pact fix).

It's hard to say for sure, but the AI seems tougher than the original (it could just be the annoying Viet Cong and those waves of Chinese in Korea). And while the interface will never be as seamless as PANZER GENERAL, SSI has done a fine job of smoothing out the learning curve, even including a decent tutorial scenario. In a year that's been rich for wargames, SSI shows why they occupy the top of the historical heap.–*T. Coleman*

SSI, (800) 245-4525
PC CD-ROM
Reader Service # 309

SYNDICATE WARS

Corporate warfare takes on a more literal meaning in this spectacular sequel to the cult favorite SYNDICATE. The great gameplay that made SYNDICATE a hit remains, but the sequel has been overhauled with a tremendous 3D engine, creative missions, and even a decent plot.



Whether you choose the ruthless Eurocorp Syndicate or the righteous Church of the New Epoch, you'll embark on new missions, with that gorgeous 3D engine adding to an immersive game world. The only drawback is the mission difficulty, and some minor annoyances have also carried over from the first game.

For big explosion and *Independence Day* fans, check out what happens to a building when a friendly SDI Laser Satellite goes berserk.—*T. Nguyen*

Bullfrog/EA
(800) 245-4525
PC CD-ROM
Reader Service # 310

Get SUCKED IN with the awesome power of ATI 3D RAGE II.

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #372

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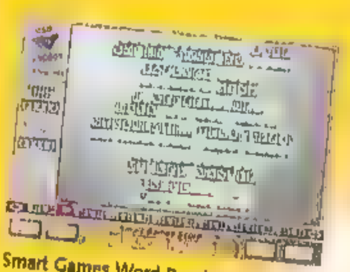

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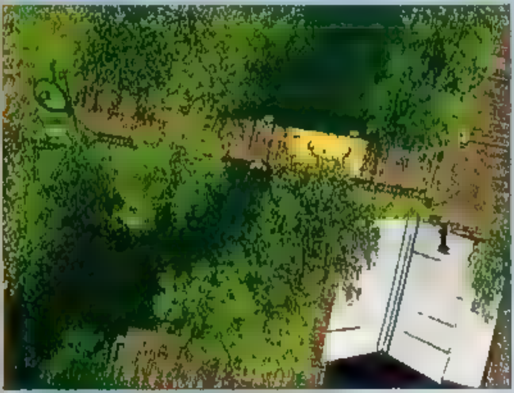
FIRST LOOK

Here's your first look at games in development. These games aren't even playable yet, but we thought you'd want to see how they're coming along.

Remember those plastic army men of green, tan, and gray that beckoned you from the back covers of comic books, filled toy racks at your local grocery store, and inevitably ended up being chewed into oblivion by the family dog? In 3DO's upcoming ARMY MEN, they come to life.

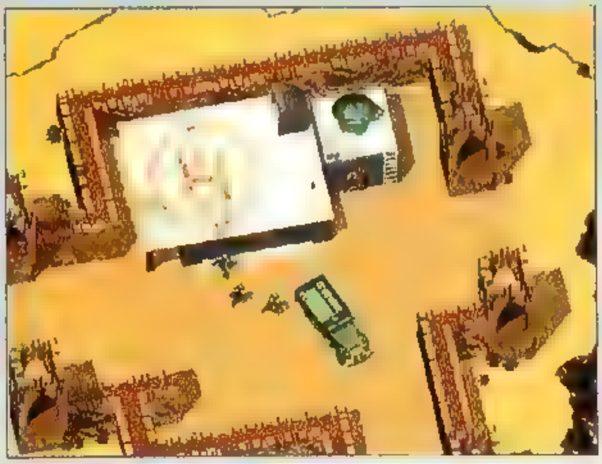
ARMY MEN is an entry-level real-time strategy game where four different types of military forces (roughly equivalent to Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines) fight through 60 to 80 scenarios to determine whether the good guys or the bad guys win. The maps provide overhead 3D isometric views of the action and the animation is superb. Every figure is rendered in 3D Studio Max with a 110-frame animated walk and movement sequence. These will be reduced to around 10 key frames per anim, as opposed to the 4-8 frames of action in most games. Perhaps most intriguing is the way each movement resolves into a traditional plastic figure pose. It's almost like *Toy Story*, sans the plastic bases seen in the animated film. We also like the *Movietone News*-style newsreel between some maps. This footage was shot using the same plastic models that are in the game, but the black and white footage has undergone a torture test so that it looks like vintage film.



BAYOU BRUISERS A valiant green tank faces off against a dastardly tan aggressor on one of the bayou maps for ARMY MEN.

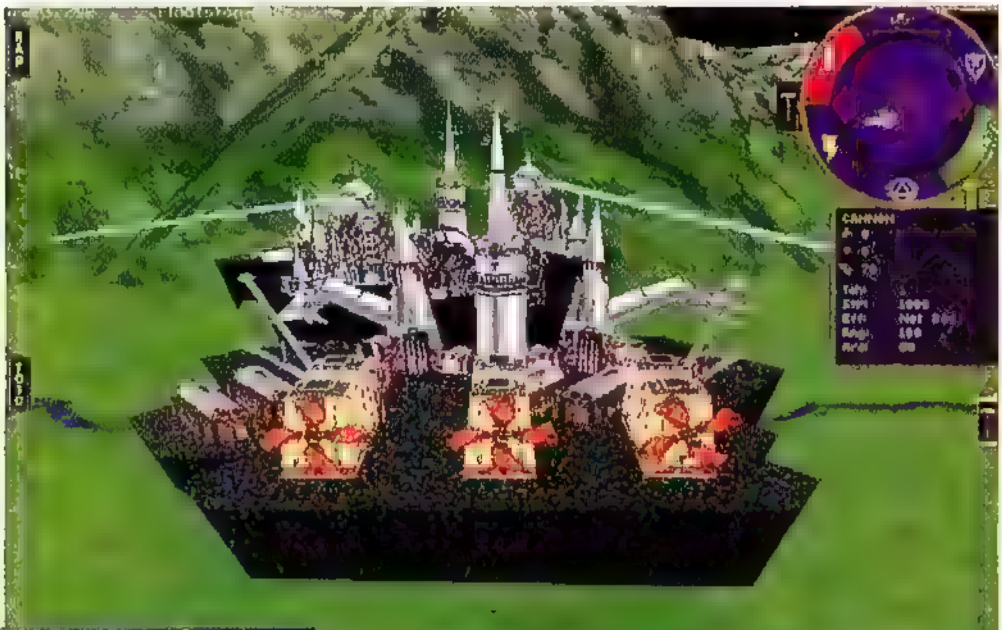
The maps offer 15 levels of fully defined terrain objects to be placed on bayou, desert alpine, or tropical maps, and all maps have palette shifts and light sourcing for night battles. Though the scenarios won't be linked via a dynamic campaign, they offer a solid variety. Some will emphasize offense and defense, while others will provide particular problems for artillery, flamethrower units, commando units, or engineers (rebuilding a bridge, sabotaging a bridge or building a fort). Most interesting may well be the scenario where you start with a limited number of troops and have to liberate additional forces from a prisoner of war stockade in order to be able to win the battle.

ARMY MEN also supports two-player combat via modem, LAN, or the Internet.—*J. Wilson*



PIPELINE

ABC College Football	OT Sports	12/96
Achtung: Spitfire!	Avalon Hill	4/97
Age of Rifles Campaigns	SSI	1/97
Agents of Justice	MicroProse	Spring 97
Aide De Camp 2	HPS Simulations	Spring 97
Battle Sport	Acclaim	2/97
Battleground: Middle East	Talonsoft	2/97
Battles of Alexander	Interactive Magic	Spring 97
Betrayal at Antara	Sierra	Spring 97
Blade Runner	Virgin/Westwood	Summer 97
Blood	Apogee	Spring 97
Blue Heat	Cyberdreams	3/97
Callahan's Crosstime Saloon	Legend	Q1/97
City of Lost Children	Psygnosis	2/97
Cloak	Sierra	3/97
Dark Earth	Mindscape	Spring 97
Descent to Undermountain	Interplay	12/96
Destruction Derby II	Psygnosis	12/96
Diablo	Blizzard	12/96
Discworld II: Reality Bytes	Psygnosis	12/96
Dungeon Keeper	Bullfrog	2/97
Ecstatica II	Psygnosis	2/97
European Air War	MicroProse	Summer 97
Flying Corps	Empire	1/97
Flying Nightmares 2	Domark	12/96
FPS Football Pro 97	Sierra	12/96
Grand Slam 97	Virgin	Spring 97
Hardball 6	Accolade	4/97
Heroes of Might and Magic II	New World	12/96
History of the World	Avalon Hill	2/97
iF22	Interactive Magic	Spring 97
iM1A2 Abrams	Interactive Magic	12/96
Jack Nicklaus Golf 97	Accolade	3/97
Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II	LucasArts	3/97
Jetfighter III	Mission Studios/Take 2	12/96
Lands of Lore: Guardians of Destiny	Westwood/Virgin	1/97
Magic: The Gathering	Acclaim	12/96
Marvel	Mindscape	Spring 97
Master of Orion II	MicroProse	12/96
M.A.X.	Interplay	1/97
MicroLeague Baseball 6.0	MicroLeague	Spring 97
NBA Live 97	EA Sports	Q1/97
NFL Legends	Accolade	1/97
Pacific General	SS	Summer 97
Reach for the Stars II	SSG/Microsoft	Spring 97
Rebel Moon Rising	Fenris Wolf	7/97
Rebellion	LucasArts	3/97
Red Baron II	Sierra	4/97
Sabre Ace	Virgin	3/97
Shadow Warrior	3D Realms/FormGen	Winter 96
Shivers 2	Sierra	3/97
SimGolf	Maxis	12/96
Spider Man: Venom Factor	Byron Preiss	Spring 97
Star Craft	Blizzard	6/97
Star Fleet Academy	Interplay	2/97
Stars!	Empire	1/97
Test Drive Off-Road	Accolade	2/97
TFX: X-22	Ocean	3/97
Theme Hospital	Bullfrog/EA	2/97
Ultima On-Line	Origin	Spring 97
Unreal	Epic	Spring 97
VR Baseball	VR Sports	Spring 97
VR Golf	VR Sports	Q1/97
X-COM: The Apocalypse	MicroProse	Spring 97
X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter	LucasArts	1/97
Zapatilism	LavaMind	1/97



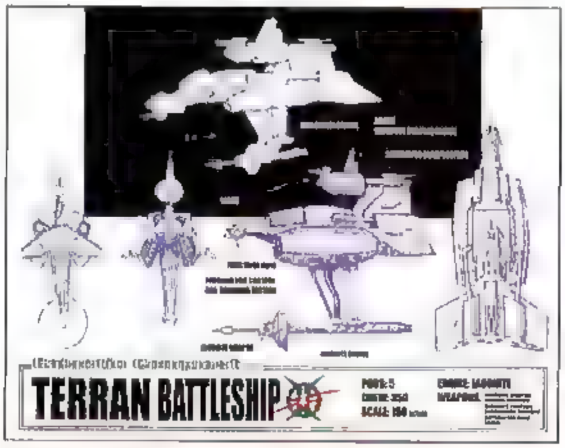
ISLAND IN THE SCUD Acclaim's Stratosphere pits flying fortresses against each other in real-time combat.

Stratosphere

Imagine a real-time strategy game where, instead of sending out your units to manage resources and take objectives for you, you took a flying fortress with all of your resources available from point to point. In this 1–4 player networkable game from Acclaim, you command the flying fortress, one bulwark of a balkanized neo-feudal system. Each of these balkanized realms has a specialty built around a tradition. Most of these specialties relate to different sciences, but some are part of a techno-mage tradition and add that sense of the fantastic to the game.

Imagine a flying SimCity with weapons; that would be close to some of the gameplay in Stratosphere. You can build up to 100 different items (defensive, offensive, and energy-related) on your flying city. Also, the higher your rank becomes, the bigger your fortress can become. Naturally, there are trade-offs between size and maneuverability, so you may not opt for the biggest fortress all the time.

Stratosphere will feature a mission-based campaign with gameplay of approximately 20 to 60 minutes per mission. Campaigns will differ by house because of strategies specific to the house tradition and weapons which are specific to each given house. The game is being built with campaign add-ons in mind, à la Command & Conquer and WarCraft II.—*J. Wilson*



SHIP SHAPE These sketches for a Terran warship reflect some of the design detail underlying the vessels in Galactic Conquest.

Galactic Conquest

Five distinctly different races compete for control of a galaxy in Galactic Conquest (working title) from 3DO. Although games of galactic conquest are a dime a dozen, this one has plenty of distinctive features. Where the traditional cosmic conquest game takes dozens of hours to get from colony to conquest, Galactic Conquest is being designed as a four-hour game for up to five players via LAN or Internet. It will also have AI opponents who actually learn from your style of play.

Second, Galactic Conquest is being designed to be replayable with circa 60 different alien artifacts, which can affect the outcome of the game, being randomly available within any given game.

Third, each of the alien races has a different personality, ergonomically designed ships that look and act differently for each race, and a different means of communicating and conducting diplomacy. The P'tash communicate via color, the T'ganth speak with a split-lip mouth, the Izmani communicate through movement, the Terrans use computers, and the Huminos speak English. The game features some of the most original alien art we've seen in a game to date; even the interface looks slightly different, depending on which race you are controlling in the game.—*J. Wilson*

P'TASHING OF TEETH Who's afraid of an alien aggressor who communicates by changing color? Gamers in Galactic Conquest should be.

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #169

KIDS TO ADULTS
K-A
AGES 6+

HANDS ON

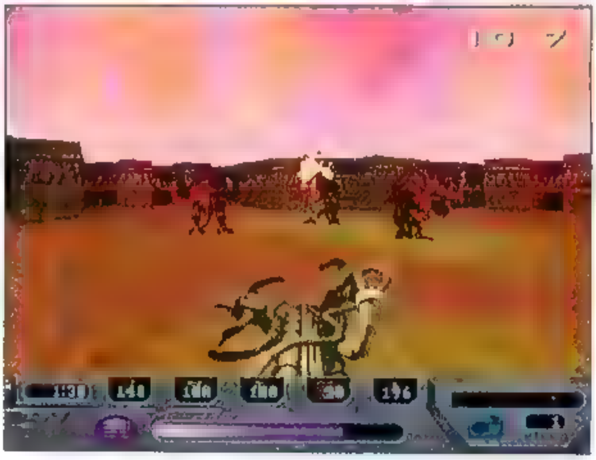
These are the products in development we've actually spent some time with. They represent some of the most interesting titles in the Pipeline, and they are complete enough to actually tell how they're going to play. Most should be released soon.

Rebel Moon Rising

One of the first games we've seen designed to take advantage of Intel's MMX instruction set, REBEL MOON RISING (RMR) is the follow-on to REBEL MOON, a game currently bundled with the 3D Blaster board. The Win 95 native RMR is a mission-based, first-person 3D shooter whose CPU-based engine benefits from MMX.

Unlike some 3D shooters, RMR actually has a back story that figures into the game. The moon has been colonized for high yield, low-gravity agriculture. Though under international control from Earth, the units on the moon decide to declare their independence. You're a rebel commando trying to defend lunar installations in the various levels against the terran assault forces. Fenris Wolf describes RMR as kind of a hybrid between DUKE NUKEM 3D and MECHWARRIOR 2. Rather than just run through and shoot anything that moves, you have other objectives. There are four different mission types: Commando, Search and Destroy, Defense, and Rescue.

The overall feel of RMR is solid, though the graphics do feel a little dated, with one notable exception: all gunfire is accented by RMR's dynamic lighting engine (possibly courtesy of MMX). The controls are of your standard twitch-and-splatter mouse/keyboard variant, though "mouse-looking" is not yet implemented. RMR also has a map overview mode where you can see the level map and take down bad guys simultaneously. Some elements, like switches, are somewhat difficult to identify, though two demos as well as two training missions will help get you acclimated. Because your adventures take place on the moon, you'll need to either recharge your air supply or find an oxygen recycler, usually hidden somewhere on the level. Seven weapons, getting progressively more pernicious, help you reduce enemy forces to smoldering piles.



Does MMX spruce up RMR? Well, using a 2D-only graphics board and running at a 512x384 resolution (true color) on an Intel P55C (a 200 MHz Pentium with MMX), we saw frame rates stay at around 20 frames per second (fps), whereas running RMR without MMX drops the frame rate to about 9 fps.

What RMR's "2.5D" engine lacks in visual panache, the game makes up for in the different mission types. It should be interesting for action gamers who seek meaning to their death and destruction. RMR will first ship bundled with Intel's P55C Pentium OverDrive chip in January, and the retail version with modem/network/Internet multiplayer capabilities will ship in May. *—Dave Salvator*

Fenris Wolf, (612) 484 8988

Win 95 CD-ROM

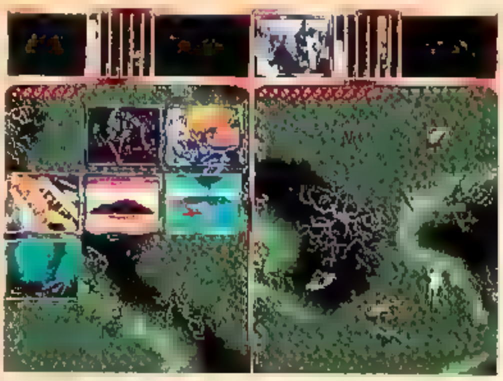
Magic: The Gathering—BattleMage

BATTLEMAGE, Acclaim's real-time strategy game based on the *Magic: The Gathering* universe, has the feel of a duel between archmages. One to four gamers can face off against each other in Duel Mode, and solitaire gamers can compete in an ongoing Campaign Mode. In the game, planeswalkers (wizards) conjure creatures and invoke spells to send after their rivals. The planeswalkers do not move, but the conjured creatures wing, speed, and lumber toward their rivals, as do the effects of the offensive spells, providing a sense of action at all times. Planeswalkers can battle over 30 or more terrain types, each reflecting its own type of mana and rewarding those that use its specialty spells. In the campaign mode, planeswalkers try to defeat their six different rivals and collect enough new spells and artifacts to be able to control the entire map.

Not to be confused with the computer conversion of the card game itself (from MicroProse and Sid Meier), MTG: BATTLEMAGE feels like the duel that the collectible card game is supposed to simulate, yet the terms are different from those of the card games. Instead of decks, players use troves, tomes, libraries, and armories as the depositories for their spells, artifacts, and creatures. Plus there are hidden artifacts (somewhat like the rare cards in the collectible card game) and utilities for customizing your own spell and creature combinations. Also, the designers have wisely allowed for portability in that gamers can copy their armies of creatures and spell libraries to disk and use them on a friend's computer.*—J. Wilson*

Acclaim, (516) 656-5000

Win 95 CD-ROM



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YOU DON'T KNOW JACK net

CIRCLE READER SERVICE #48

The Newest Star Wa

A few short months from now, in a very familiar galaxy, the trilogy gamers have waited for will finally arrive. LucasArts will bring a new generation of Star Wars games to this world, and you'll find you're no longer alone in the universe. This multiplayer trio should should keep Rebels and Imperials alike satisfied while Lucas ferments the next film trilogy. Star Wars Rebellion, a grand strategy game, makes you absolute ruler of the Empire or Alliance. Jedi Knight, of course, is the sequel to Dark Forces. X-Wing vs TIE Fighter is vying for the title of ultimate multiplayer space sim. So, suit up and climb aboard the Millennium Falcon for the ride of your life. Star Wars is back, and the Force is stronger than ever.

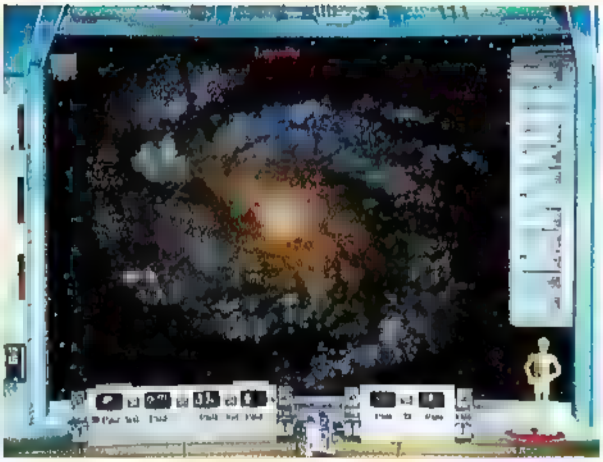
Trilogy

Rebellion

Striking Back At The Empire

REBELLION Gives You Full Reign Over The Star Wars Universe

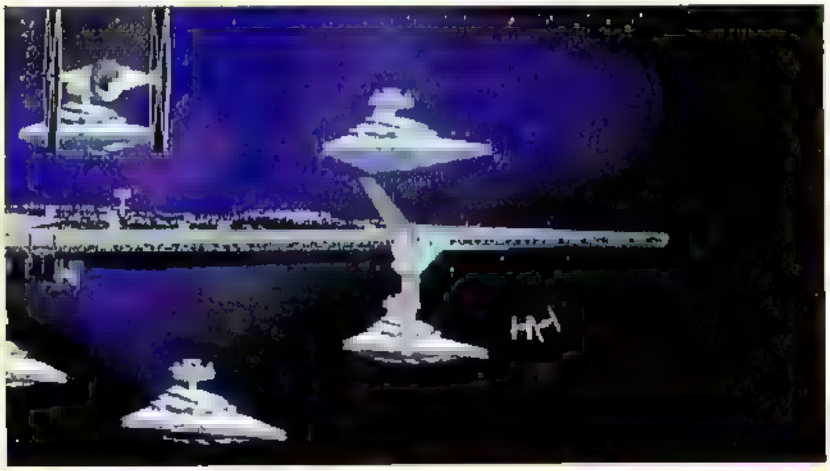
by Elliott Chin



THE VIEW FROM UP HERE From [illegible] galactic sectors and their planets, [illegible] troops, and hear C3PO and [illegible] through all your galactic data.

The chance to step into the *Star Wars* universe has long held a special lure. Yet, in previous *Star Wars* games, we've only had a small impact on the universe. Imagine what you could do in the *Star Wars* universe if you weren't a lowly fighter pilot, but rather Emperor Palpatine or Alliance leader Mon Mothma. You could crush the Rebel Alliance for good, or restore peace and freedom to the galaxy with a swift Alliance victory. Thousands of gamers and *Star Wars* fans have been crying out for a game of such grand design for years, and finally, LucasArts is about to answer them with the first Star Wars strategy game: REBELLION.

CGW recently visited LucasArts for the first test drive of STAR WARS: REBELLION, and what we saw looks very promising. REBELLION is a real-time strategy game, though not in the same vein as COMMAND & CONQUER or WARCRAFT II. REBELLION actually plays more like two games. One element is a grand strategic module which is closest in scope and gameplay to MASTER OF ORION, where you manage a galactic civilization (without the research element). There's also 3D real-time tactical space combat. In both the strategic and tactical portions of the game, your enemy is moving his pieces simultaneously with you in real time.



A NEW SAGA REBELLION takes place in [illegible] *Back*, after the Empire has been hand[illegible]

Prelude to Rebellion

The scope of REBELLION is massive. The game stretches across the entire *Star Wars* galaxy, from the icy planet of Hoth to the Imperial Seat at Coruscant. There are three galaxy sizes—100 planets, 150 planets, and 200 planets—a parameter which you set before each game.

Coolhand, REBELLION's developers (their previous credit is HARPOON 2), refer to it as "a game about characters, fleets and planet resources." The game is open-ended, and there is no campaign *per se*. Instead, you're given a set of victory conditions and the entire game involves you amassing enough power and resources to ultimately achieve those victory goals.

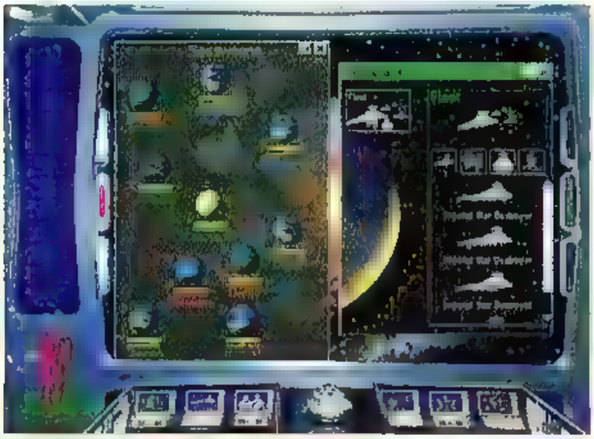
When play begins, you start with a limited number of worlds already in your command, a pre-set fleet, and a few characters. Depending on which side you choose, your starting conditions will vary. As the Empire, you begin with a greater number of worlds and a larger fleet, but your worlds are less

SURRENDER IS NOT

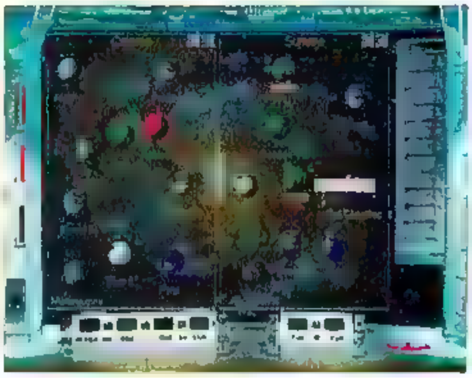
COMMAND & CONQUER
RED ALERT

loyal and less productive. If you choose the Rebel side, you start with fewer ships and fewer worlds, but other worlds will be more inclined to side with you. You also have a mobile headquarters which you can move from system to system as you see fit.

Each side must meet three victory conditions to win the game. The Empire must capture Luke Skywalker and Mon Mothma, and destroy the Rebel base. The Alliance wins once it captures Darth Vadar, the Emperor and takes the Imperial capital at Coruscant. You must satisfy all three victory conditions simultaneously if you wish to win, and you can always launch counterattacks to deprive your opponent of achieved victory conditions. If the Empire captures Luke and the Rebel base, you could reclaim the base and rescue Luke, thus stealing victory from their grasp. Theoretically, you could win the game by ignoring conquest and making a beeline to the three victory goals, but what's more likely is that you will end up conquering planets, building resources and creating armadas to give you the necessary firepower and reach to achieve your goals with confidence.



IMPERIAL MARCH This window shows the [illegible] sector and the fleets in orbit around the [illegible] you move ships, conduct bombardments [illegible] troops and characters.



EMPIRE VS ALLIANCE [illegible] play, and it will support two-player play over a [illegible] modem or LAN.

Jedi Knights

One of the key elements of REBELLION is the use of characters. There are over 60 personalities in the game, drawn from the three *Star Wars* movies, Timothy Zahn books, and comic books. In terms of gameplay, they operate in a much broader scope than the heroes from games such as MASTER OF ORION. For one, you have to find most characters on your own, by exploring planets. To enhance replayability, the designers haven't placed characters on the worlds they inhabited in the books and movies (so you wouldn't find Lando on Bespin all the time). The personalities also aren't static in their loyalty; some can be swayed to the Dark Side and vice versa.

The characters are also integral components of the game, not just doctored stat modifiers. All missions in the game can only be performed with characters, or special forces. However, characters are always better equipped to succeed in missions than special forces. There are at least 12 missions available for your characters to perform, including espionage, reconnaissance, diplomacy, assassination, abduction, and sabotage. Characters and their missions are actually vital to your overall success. You take direct hits in loyalty whenever you lose a fleet battle, so you'll use your characters instead of compromising your fleet. (You might conduct a special sabotage mission to take out the Death Star rather than committing a massive fleet to that foolish endeavor.)

Characters can work together in missions, so you can group Luke, Chewbacca, Han, Leia and Lando together and send them into the heart of the Empire to abduct the Emperor. In grouped missions, you can assign different characters to different tasks, so that Luke can act as a decoy to draw out Darth Vadar, while Han and Chewbacca infiltrate the Death Star and kidnap Palpatine.

In addition to performing their missions, characters also provide bonuses in combat—Vice Admiral Thrawn will improve capital ships in his fleet, and Wedge will confer his piloting skills onto the other fighter pilots in his group.

The characters all have pasts and personalities which factor into the game. Luke, for example, will eventually attempt to leave your service to seek out Yoda and become a Jedi Knight. There's a bounty on Han Solo's head, and occasionally Boba Fett will find him and capture him. Of course, if this does happen, you can mount an expedition to rescue him. Many characters are linked, so that if Han ever were captured, Luke would go after him anyway. Other characters who are linked include Han and Chewbacca, Leia and Luke and, of course, Darth Vadar and Luke.

This space available for immediate occupancy.

BOBA FETT? WHERE? One of the random events [illegible] capture at the hands of the [illegible] both random and planned, also affect gameplay.

Imperial Resources

To achieve the power necessary for a final victory, you need to build a great fleet. To do that, you need enough shipyards and resources, and to gain that, you have to control a galaxy's worth of planets. Every planet has three vital statistics: loyalty, energy, and raw materials. Both energy and raw materials exist in finite numbers. The energy of a planet controls how many structures can be built in that system. Whether it's a shipyard, an ion cannon, a troop training facility, mine or refinery, the structure will take one energy point from the planet's total. So a planet with 10 energy points can support 10 facilities.

Raw materials are basic resources which must be converted to refined materials. Everything in the game (with the exception of characters) requires refined materials for construction. To extract raw materials from a planet, you need one mine for each raw material point. Then, to convert the raw materials to refined materials, you need one refinery per mine. Your raw and refined materials are then moved to a galactic pool from which all your planets draw when they construct facilities and ships.

However, the number of mines and refineries you build is dependent on the planet's energy count, so you will have to strategically manage your facilities and materials. If your planet had 10 raw material points, and you built 10 mines, you'd have no energy available for refineries or construction yards. Since materials are pooled, you can create planets that solely extract raw materials, other planets that are filled with refineries for processing materials, and still other planets that serve only as construction yards.

Your initial planets all have pre built facilities, but captured and colonized planets will not. The first order of business once you've taken a planet is placing a construction yard there. The other facility types are: mine, refinery, unit training facility, shipyard and planet defense. What you build after the construction yard depends on what you want the planet to specialize in. If you want to start building ships, you will construct a shipyard. If you want to boost refined material production, you might build a mine and refinery first. The only restriction is the energy output of each planet.

Admiral Thrawn's War Room

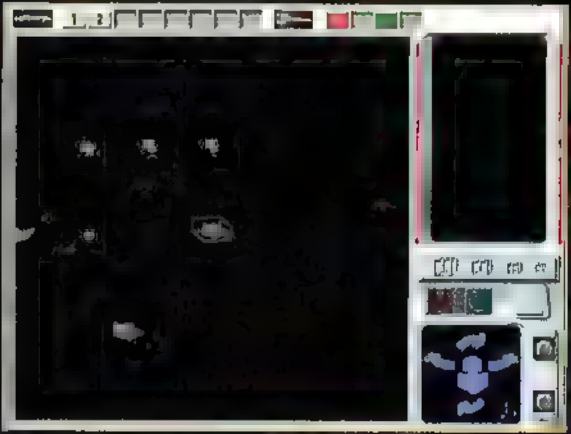
The tactical module is currently taking a back seat to the strategic model, which is nearly complete, but we did manage to play a little combat.

You don't have complete freedom over your movements, since your 2D controller (the mouse) can't pinpoint a place on the z-axis. Movement is thus target- or waypoint-specific. You can click on targets, assign your fleet a formation and mission, and your ships will then move in 3D space toward the enemy fleet. You can also move your ships via waypoints which are scattered throughout the cube on all three axis. So if you wanted to maneuver your ship to an area and then have it attack, you would click on the waypoints you wanted him to traverse and then have him engage the enemy vessel.

Because combat will tend to get frenzied, LucasArts is providing you much more flexibility in issuing commands to your ships so you won't have to micromanage in COMMAND & CONQUER fashion.

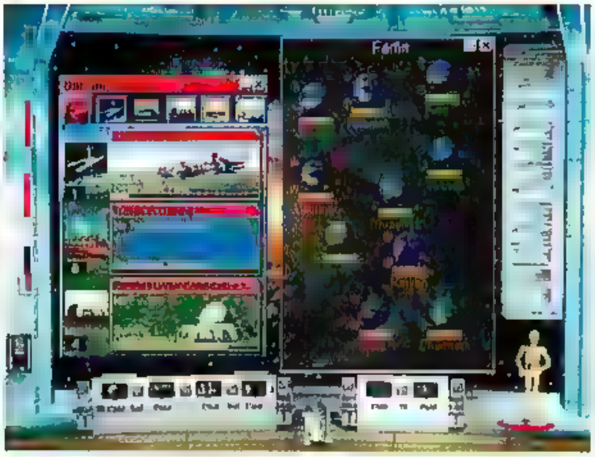
First, there will be an "action" key, which, when pressed, will make your ship engage the closest target. More importantly, though, you can assign formations and missions to your ships. You can group a number of capital ships or fighters and have them form a spherical formation for defense, a cylindrical formation for offense, or more traditional naval formations such as line-abreast and ahead. There is also a pickets-forward formation which places your fighters ahead of your capital ships as a shield.

Alternatively, you can assign a mission to a group of ships and the computer will then pick the formation best suited to the task. Some of the missions include: the hammer, where your ships attack the enemy from above; the anvil, where they attack from below; hit and fade; frontal assault; and attacks from the left and right.



SHIP TO SHIP tactical battle occurs in a 3D cube, which requires a few adjustments to gameplay [illegible] in mind, this is an early look at the tactical module. The final version, which could look very [illegible] and more visual features.

IN THE FUTURE,
YOU DON'T REBUILD.
YOU RELOAD.
SHATTERED STEEL
Interplay
BY GAMERS. FOR GAMERS.



CHURNING OUT THE DEATH STA[illegible] planets and the selected pl[illegible] build facilities, ships and troop[illegible] show planet loyalties and enemy [illegible]

Fomenting Rebellion

Perhaps the most important planetary statistic is loyalty. Loyalty is a measure of a planet's allegiance to the Empire or Alliance. It affects a planet's manufacturing capabilities and production and is a dynamic number that can fluctuate as the game progresses. When you command a majority of loyalty and have a garrison or facility on a planet, it switches to your control. As long as you command 60 percent loyalty from a planet, it will work efficiently for you. However, if your loyalty dips below this number, you could face an uprising and illegal smuggling on the planet. Smuggling eats into your resources because the planet actually starts contributing a percentage of its raw and refined materials to the enemy side. When an uprising occurs, the local populace will attack your garrisons. Once all garrisons are defeated, the planet will become hostile and could switch sides.

Obviously, gaining loyalty is a huge part of the game, and as the Alliance, it is vital that you reach every planet and gain its loyalty. Various factors can affect this number. On the negative side, bombarding a planet, losing a fleet battle or destroying planets with a Death Star (if you are the Empire) will lower loyalty towards you on a given planet. However, garrisoning a planet with troops, stationing facilities on a planet or setting up your HQ there (if you are the Rebels), will improve loyalty. Also, sending characters on diplomatic missions to a planet can improve its loyalty. Only special forces (a group of units in the game comprised of spies, diplomats and commandos) and characters can perform diplomatic missions, but you will have to be careful, as your characters are susceptible to capture while on missions.

If you're playing the Empire, you can circumvent loyalty to an extent. Planetary control is calculated by totaling a planet's loyalty, the military presence, and diplomatic missions sent there. You can control a planet with a powerful army and fleet, though it will diminish loyalty on a planet, making it more susceptible to uprising and defection. Such a strategy of control through terror also stretches the Empire thin and requires an enormous industrial machine.

War Machine

Capturing planets is your intermediate step to control of the galaxy. You can take most neutral planets by sending diplomatic missions to them to sway their loyalty, or simply assault and conquer them with troops. Uninhabited planets are easy pickings, since all you need do is simply establish one facility or slat on one garrison there and it automatically becomes a loyal subject.

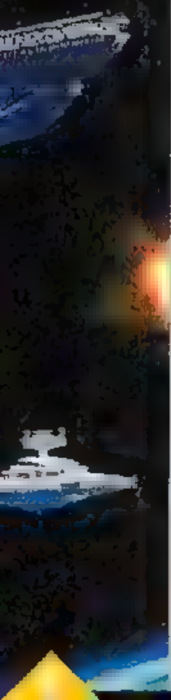
The other types of planets (Rebel and Imperial-controlled) can only be taken by force. If a planet is guarded by an enemy fleet, you will have to clear away all enemy ships in tactical space combat. Before every tactical combat, though, the computer will ask if you want to play the combat yourself, or let the computer resolve it quickly. Sometimes, simply because of the sheer number of battles you will have to wage, having the computer abstract the battles for you will be the wisest move. Other times, especially in key battles, you will take control yourself.

If you win in tactical combat, your fleet then must destroy all planetary defenses and shields. Sometimes this is easier said then done, as you can build planetary shields, and a preponderance of shields will negate bombardment. In these cases, you will need to send characters to sabotage the shields before your ship can conduct bombardments and drop troops onto the planet. Once you've defeated all enemy troops and establish your own garrison, control will switch to your side. And at that time, you'll have to send a diplomatic cleanup crew in your wake to mop up the damage to loyalty and bring the planet into line.

The Galactic Sum of Parts

LucasArts looks on track to provide gamers with a galaxy rich with strategic challenges, innovative combat and all the personality of the *Star Wars* mythology. Add to this the exhilaration that comes from meting out punishment with a Death Star or directing a rescue effort with Luke and Han and you could have a dream come true for *Star Wars* fans everywhere. If LucasArts stays true to the design and delivers on the promise of this early version, then gamers will at last have the power to write the final chapter in the *Star Wars* saga.

FATHER AND SON Many characters are linked in the game; when Darth and Luke meet in a system, they will automatically engage each other. Depending on the outcome, one or both of them could end up injured or captured.



Jedi Knight

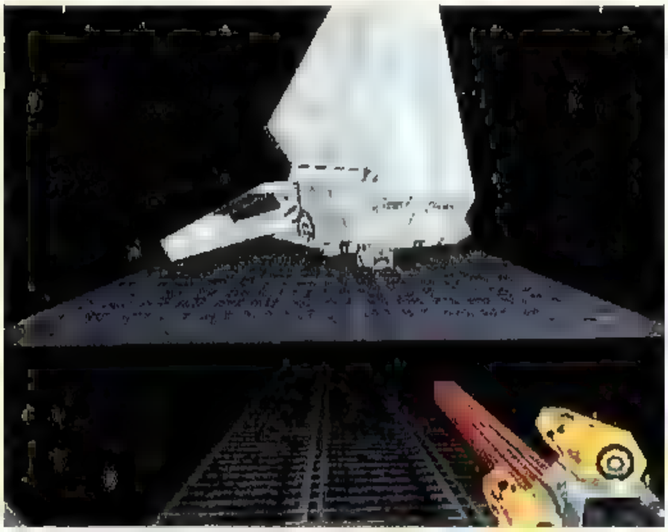
Feel the Force

The Dark Side Returns In LucasArts' DARK FORCES Sequel

by V. Long

LucasArts' DARK FORCES was a great first-person action game, but even its biggest fans argued that DARK FORCES could have been better...much better. In creating JEDI KNIGHT, the 3D sequel to DARK FORCES, it's clear that LucasArts intended to create a winner.

At the time of *CGW's* visit, the JEDI project had reached an exciting point where the game's elements were beginning to come together. What we saw there and describe here is not necessarily what will appear in the final product, but certainly indicates a big step into the dimension beyond "playing the game," into one of "living the game."



THE GREAT OUTDOORS One very [illegible] son 3D "corridor crawls" is the ability [illegible] lack thereof.

The Power of the Dark Side

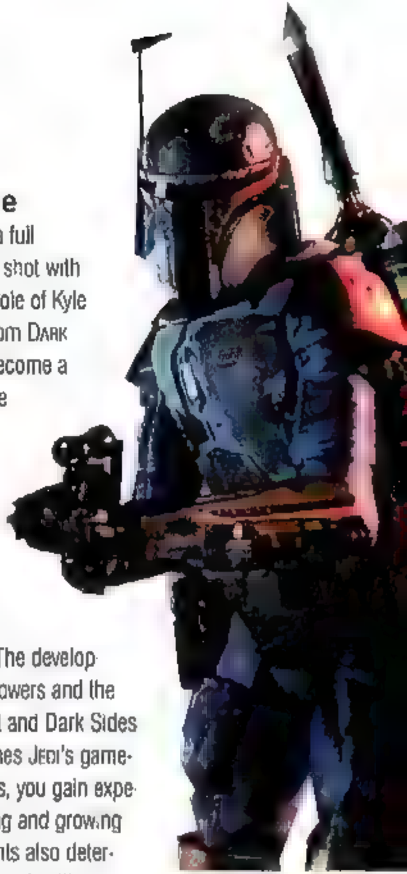
JEDI's story unfolds via full motion video cut scenes shot with live actors. You play the role of Kyle Katarn, the mercenary from DARK FORCES, as he trains to become a Jedi Knight. Your ultimate goal is to avenge your father's death and fulfill his quest to stop Jerec, the leader of the Dark Jedi.

Although you fight the Dark Jedi, you can still embrace the Dark Side. The development of different Force powers and the choice between the Light and Dark Sides are what truly distinguishes JEDI's gameplay. By completing levels, you gain experience points for acquiring and growing Force powers. These points also determine the amount of mana health or energy—available for using a Force power.

Whatever Force powers you saw in the *Star Wars* movies will be included in JEDI. Basic Force powers can boost speed, as well as increase jumping and healing abilities. Light Force powers can create forcefields and invisibility. The best known are probably the Dark Force powers, which enable players to psychokinetically throw objects, hurl lightning bolts, and even strangle opponents from afar (and yes, the gagging victims even dangle inches off the ground).

The JEDI team hopes to visually enhance the Force powers with particle effects. For example, a Force Push will shoot a column of particles from the hand to push against the target.

Whichever path you take, you'll need all the Force power you can summon when you encounter the seven Dark Jedi. Jerec, their leader, seeks to take the immense power of the Valley of the Jedi, an ancient Jedi burial ground. Each one represents a distinct archetypal personality as in Akira Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai*.



BOBA FETT'S BACK?! LucasArts tells us that our favorite bounty hunter won't be appearing in JEDI KNIGHT. But hope springs eternal.

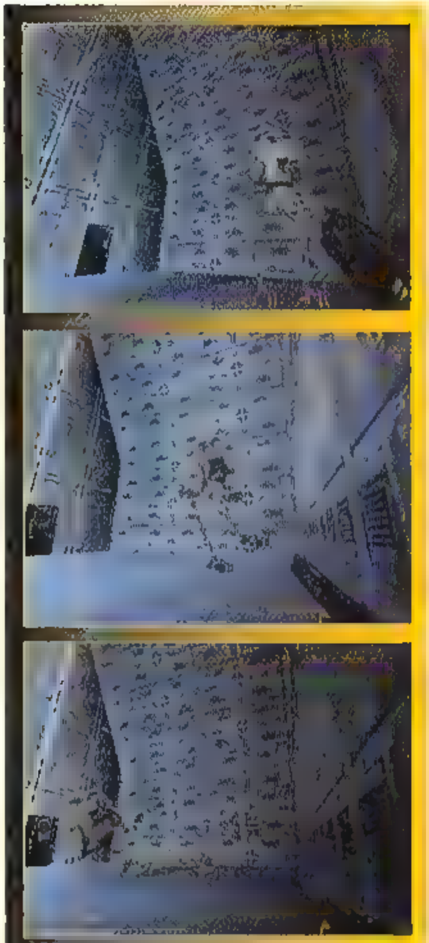
Although the Dark Jedi obviously outnumber you, fear not that you face them alone. In JEDI, Rahn is your mentor, much like Obi-Wan Ben Kenobi was Luke Skywalker's. He appears every now and then, and when he does, you'd better pay attention to what he tells you.

In Stunning 3D

For the real action, the characters and levels are rendered in true 3D texture-mapped polygons with MIP mapping and dynamic shadowing. For eye-popping graphics, LucasArts will support 3D graphics accelerators via Direct3D. Character animations are impressively smooth because JEDI uses unlimited frames of animation: depending on the computer's power, extra frames are interpolated between key frames.

In addition to the first person viewpoint, players can also opt for the third-person perspective, which helps for puzzle solving. Also helpful in exploring the intricately crafted levels is the crouch feature from DARK FORCES.

Large open spaces, such as bottomless engine bays and vast outdoor cliffs, abound in JEDI's environment. Even underwater areas will look spectacular because of translucency and lighting effects (think MARIO 64). The environment is also immersively interactive: stray shots will destroy various objects; and you can drive speeder bikes and flying vehicles.



SPAM IN A CAN [illegible] a trick, but rest as[illegible] Trooper [illegible]

Populating the scenic environment are bounty hunters, Imperial Stormtroopers, and various monsters—including some that fly or swim. Also thrown into the fray are innocent "pedestrians." Chin discourages players from wantonly killing innocent bystanders, "JEDI KNIGHT is not a kill-fest. Blood, guts, gore, and gibs is not what JEDI KNIGHT is about." Among the weapons at your disposal are blaster pistols, laser rifles, and thermal detonators. Realistically modeled recoil effects add to the visceral feel of JEDI.

For accomplished Jedi, the light saber will be the preferred weapon despite its limited range. We witnessed one brave programmer use a "mere" light saber to attack and topple an AT-ST Walker. The saber is capable of six precise strikes: left and right overhead, sideslash, and upward cuts. The Force can help you use the saber to deflect even blaster shots. Chin notes that defeating the Dark Jedi will require a light saber... and lots of Force.

Bring Your Own Saber

Those disappointed by DARK FORCES's lack of multiplayer can now rejoice. JEDI supports multiplayer via DirectPlay for at least 8 players. Members on the programming team say that multiplayer performance over the Internet will be superior to QUAKE. There will be combat, team, and capture-the-flag modes.

JEDI promises to revitalize, if not revolutionize, multiplayer combat. Players can ride speeder bikes and flying vehicles into multiplayer mayhem. The light saber is a completely unique melee weapon, and the Force powers, such as the Force Grip, inject completely new meaning to grabbing your opponents by their jugulars. By far the most interesting aspect of multiplayer JEDI is that your character's abilities are determined by what you've accomplished during solo play for JEDI. Yes, this means JEDI has the save-game feature which was sorely lacking in DARK FORCES.

COGs in the Machine

The controls will be similar to QUAKE'S, except that the freelook feature will be always be active. If desired, the controls can be redefined. The programmers are also considering the ability to make macros. Players can easily create custom graphics and levels. Although LucasArts probably won't release the development tools, it encourages others to make their own utilities.

In addition, players can modify the behavior of nearly every discrete element via a scripting language called "COG." Huebner notes, "COG is a full implementation of C syntax with expandable verbs, and is more flexible." Because COG is an interpreted language, all you need is a text editor to change monster behavior, add new weapons, and even enable new Force powers...you can literally redefine the universe. During our tour of the JEDI facilities, we heard more than one programmer exclaim, "You can do anything with this engine."

When JEDI ships early in the second quarter of this year, you'll need at least a Pentium 60 with 16 MB and Windows 95 to feel the Force.

Yun
Rahn
Maw
Pic
Gorc

THE GANG You play the role of Kyle Katarn, whose goal is to stop Jerec from taking the legendary Valley of the Jedi and its immense power.

X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter

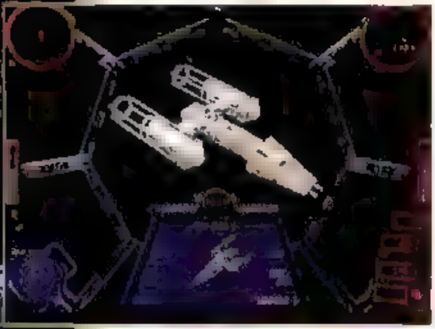
Aces Of The Stars

Dogfighting Gets Personal In X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter

by Elliott Chin

TIE Fighter, and to a lesser extent X-Wing, were great space sims with a major omission: they lacked that special thrill that comes with battling against human opponents. However, this restriction will soon be thrown out the airlock with LucasArts' upcoming X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter.

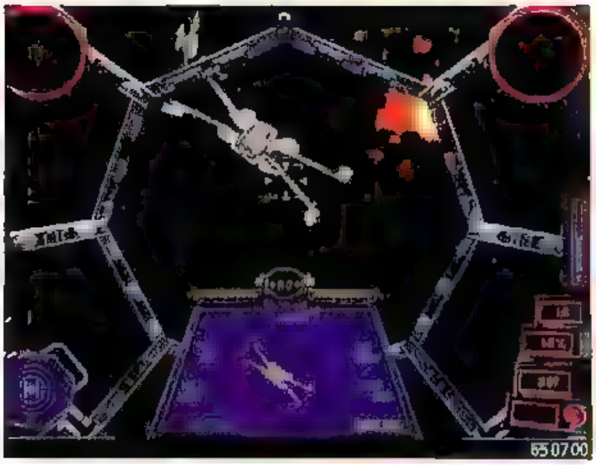
X vs TIE is aimed squarely at multiplayer action, it has no solo campaign. However, if you do want to fly alone, there will be single player "battles," which are short collections of missions strung together with a traditional Rebel vs. Empire storyline. These battles will also be playable multiplayer, and are designed for up to four-on-four play, with players picking teams and playing for the Empire or Rebellion. In single player, you can take your pick of roles (you could be the bomber in the Y-Wing or fly escort in an X Wing). In multiplayer, different players assume each role. These roles will change according to each mission, giving players variety in the craft they fly and the roles they play.



PICTURE PERFECT In [illegible] graphics the game [illegible] games in progress and [illegible] ships in the dogfights [illegible] will inherit whatever [illegible]

There will also be multiplayer tournaments, composed of skill-based missions. One mission could be a race, another could be a dogfight, and another could be an obstacle course. Points are tallied up at the end of each mission, and the player with the most points at the tournament's end is declared the best pilot. X vs. TIE will also offer quick and dirty dogfights, races, and single missions for quick action. In total, there will be around 70 missions available.

For you competitive pilots, there will be a built-in ranking system. The 25 ranks are based on amassed points. These points are determined by the quality of your opponents. If you beat a high ranked player or a good AI opponent, you get more points than if you take out a rookie.



UP YOUR SIX The HUD has [illegible] bearing and current [illegible] he's firing at you and [illegible]

The Best Fighter Yet

Aside from the jump to multiplayer gaming, X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter differs from its predecessors in its graphics engine and in key areas of gameplay. The graphics are now breathtakingly rendered at 640x480 resolution in 16-bit color, with gorgeous textures and fantastic detail.

Gameplay is also being balanced so that weak ships, like the shieldless TIE Fighter, won't be grossly outmatched by the more powerful X Wings. The firing rate of all ships has been sped up, and movement has changed. Now, your turning rate is a function of your throttle and current speed. The faster you go, the harder it is to turn and take out the bogey on your tail. Redirecting energy from engines to other subsystems will hinder your maneuverability.

During multiplayer dogfights, you don't want to type while being blasted, so LucasArts is adding hot keys for simple chat messages and commands. Typing P will target human players, and hitting another hot-key will broadcast a help message to your allies. The game will have pop-up menus to convey data about your wingmen so you needn't spend time typing to ask for information.

There is no doubt that X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter is one of the most hotly anticipated games of the year. Even in its beta stage it plays better than TIE Fighter, and it has a good mix of missions. If the final game is as smooth as the beta version, X-Wing vs TIE Fighter could very well displace Quake, Duke, and Warcraft II and become the network game of choice.

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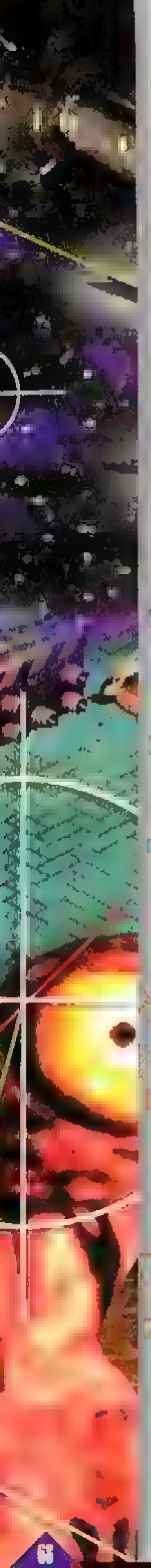
Lock On And Blast 'Em

Strategies & Tactics For Four Great Science Fiction Games

In the world of science-fiction gaming, you'll fight battles that have never been fought. The new technologies and new situations presented in these games require new tactics, even for the experienced gamer. Although you may be an ace virtual tank driver, you'll find that combat in MECHWARRIOR 2: MERCENARIES is so radically different that entirely new tactics are in order. It's one thing to conquer your neighbors in CIVILIZATION, since you know they're not that much different than you. It's quite another in DEADLOCK, where their species-specific abilities can make them deadly unpredictable. So dive into the strategy guides that follow before you embark on your next interstellar journey, because in space, no one should hear you scream.



Silencer Training

Victory Through Mayhem In Crusader: No Regret

by Thierry Nguyen

Okay soldier, you made it to the Moon. Of course, if you try waltzing in through that first room without a battle plan, you'll be a red smear on the wall instead of a red scare. That's why we're here: to turn you into a lethal killing machine, one with no regret.

The bulk of this guide is devoted to general tactics. Fighting on the Moon is quite different from fighting on Earth, and I figured that you soldiers need the valuable advice. With these tactics, plus some of your own engineering, you should be able to get through most of the missions.

As a small bonus, I have run into detailed intelligence reports on missions eight and nine. I've heard many soldiers griping about the difficulty of these two missions, and I've provided solutions to the most problematic segments of these two levels.

THIS IS HOW WE DANCE

First off, you need to familiarize yourself with the interface. Quite a few mistakes can be traced back to the soldier in question pushing the wrong buttons at the wrong time. Get your interface down cold, and your skill will improve drastically.

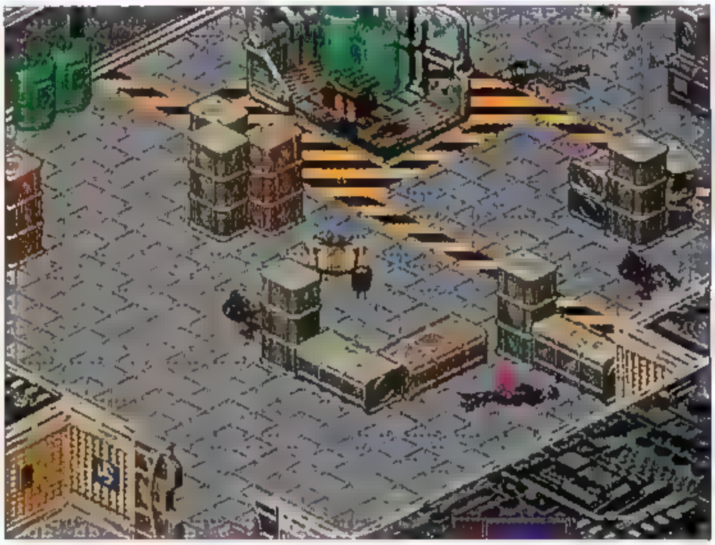
I can hear some of you grumbling about which interface to use. Some say using the mouse for aiming and the keyboard for everything else is king. Others say the gamepad is the commando's choice. For those of you who want to take advantage of the joystick support, I have one thing to say: joysticks were made for flying, not for maneuvering a man through corridors. I like to stay with the keyboard. I use the layout hard-wired in my head from Doom, but the number pad is a good interface, with major keys laid out neatly and accessibly.

WATCH YOUR AIM

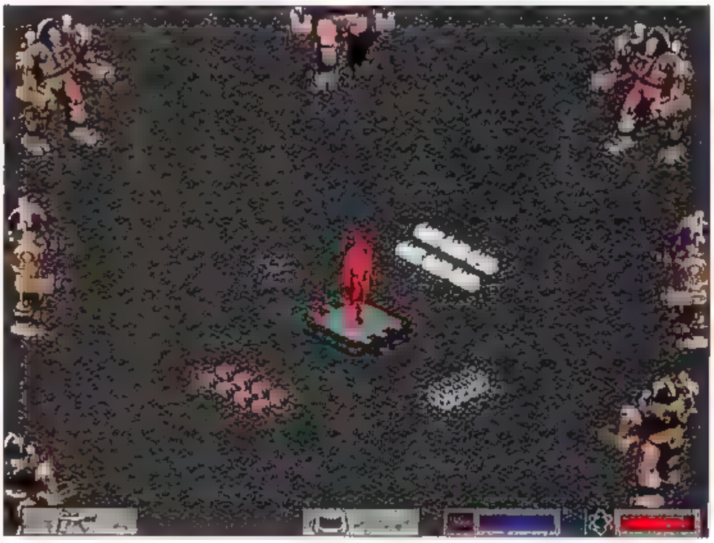
Now we get to the fun part: weapons training. You're now going to learn what weapons to use, when, and how. Pay attention–you don't want to be caught sleeping here!

Now, contrary to what you might think, you *don't* want to use those three fancy new guns all the time. In fact, you should save them for specific types of enemies, as general use would be a huge waste. Your general weapons should be the more mundane bullet shooters.

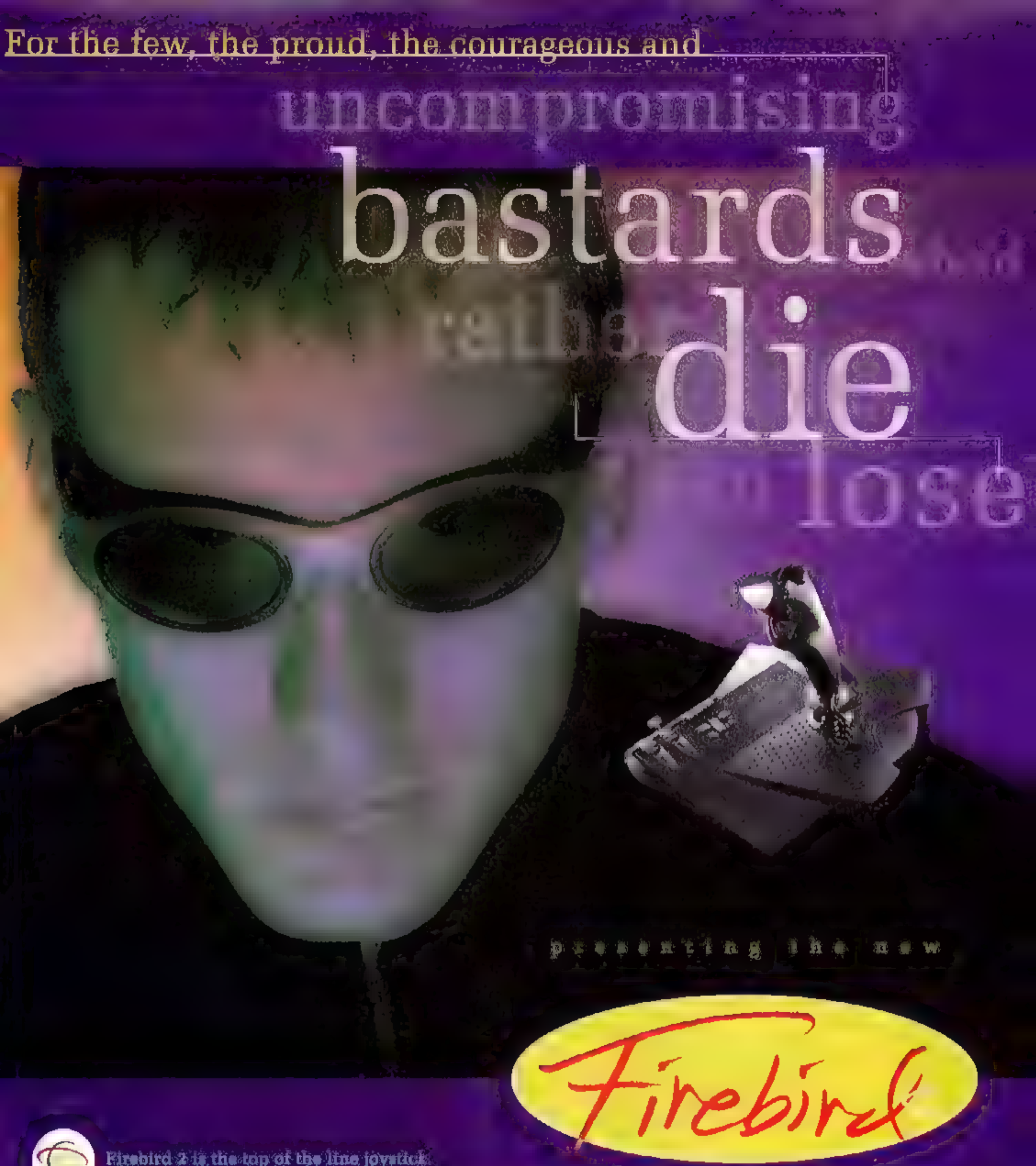
Back on Earth, you had a cozy, albeit annoying, arms dealer. Well, the Moon isn't as posh as Earth. You will learn the true meaning of "living off the land" as you scrounge all of your ammunition and weapons off of your dead comrades. Because your ammo has to be



MECHANICAL MINION Robots can be used to your advantage. Since they have unlimited ammo, use them for breaking open containers and for clearing a path.



DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME If you use the old No Remorse cheat, JASSICA16, you'll be greeted with this ugly scenario.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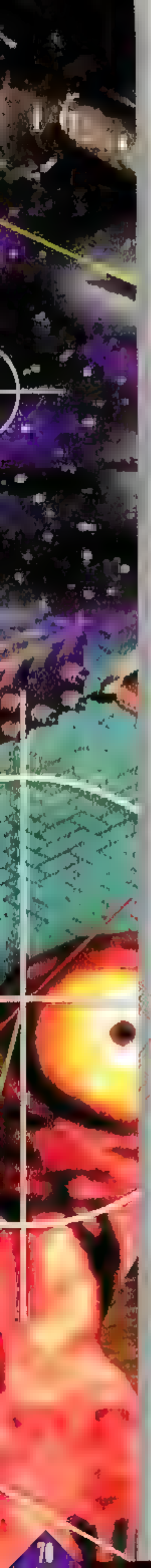
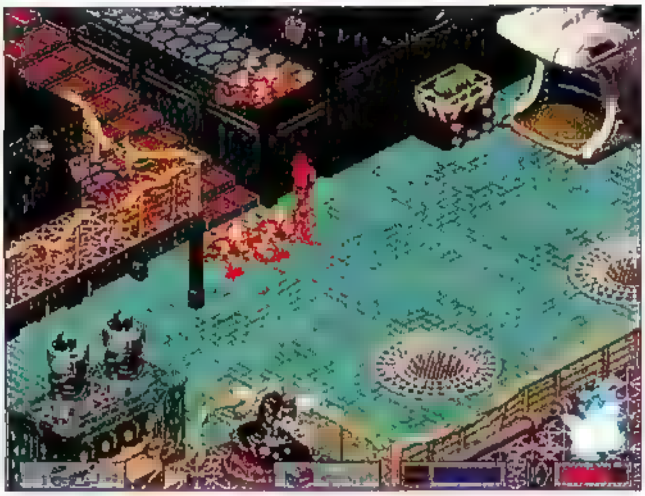




KNEE DEEP IN THE DEAD Weapons like the XP-5 make a nice mess, but they also fry your enemy so badly there's nothing left to scavenge. Use a bullet weapon on these guys if you want to pick up ammo from their bodies.

taken off mostly intact corpses, you'll need to use mundane weapons for the kill. Those fancy new arms don't leave anything behind to salvage.

You should be using either your RP-32 or your AC-88. The RP-32 is the gun you start out with, and it will be valuable early on. Many soldiers use it, so its ammunition supply line is good, and it deals out decent damage. The AC-88 is what you get when you make an automatic shotgun: very nice damage combined with a great firing rate. Once you grab one and have some ammo to feed it, you can start using it as your primary weapon, employing your RP-32 as backup.

So, when *do* you use the new weapons? Feel free to take out civilians or machinery with them. If you have the energy, the XP-5 is great against just about every robot, while the BK-16 (freezegun) and the LNR-81 (vaporizer) are about equal in power—though the nod goes to the LNR-81 due to its superior range and firing rate. Use your ARK-7 or GL-303 to destroy power generators or cameras with the splash damage.

UTILITY BELT

Some of you will probably need a primer on your new toys and how to use them properly. First, your Spider Bombs and the new Spider Mine. They're both good weapons, and the only difference between the two is that the bomb is controlled by you, while the mine is self-guiding. If you're unsure of your bomb control skills, use the mine.

The VIR Imager is essential equipment; use it as much as you can until you learn to instinctively recognize clues that will help you spot all the tripwires waiting for you. However, it eats up energy, so learn to watch for patterns as you spot each successive tripwire. Soon, you may get a feel for where a tripwire might be. At that point you can stop using the VIR Imager at all times and conserve that energy for when you really need it.

When you see a teleporter, you might want to use a disruptor on it. If you can't use the teleporter, chances are that it's a beam-in point for reinforcements. Of course, you want to make sure that you preempt any reinforcements, so, if the pad isn't blinking, slap a disruptor on it, where it can greet any newcomers with a nasty surprise. If you *do* need to use the pad, be sure to pick up your disruptor first.

Finally, you have other potentially useful explosives. You can use the mine as a substitute for the disruptor if you don't have it handy, although that's about the extent of its usefulness. The det-pac is useful for blowing up doors and obstacles in your way. Also, if you see floating or stationary mines, use the wonderful mine detonator to clear a path for you.

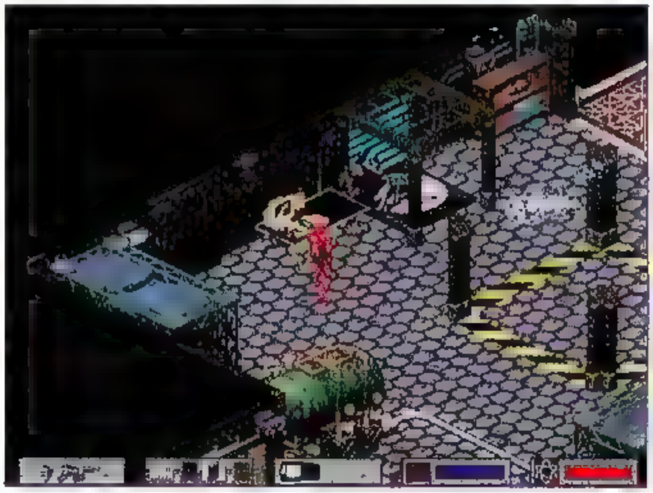
MAGIC EIGHT

For mission eight (where you need to shoot down the troop transport), many soldiers complain that they reach the top floor of the base without knowing where to go, and end up running out of time and losing the mission. You have a few minutes to find the console and shoot the marine transport down. As soon as you emerge from the elevator, run eastward, making sure to shoot cameras and the tripwire on your way. When you get out of that little passage, run northward to the computer console near the pit. If you didn't trip the red alert, you should be able to use the console to activate the light bridge.

Then make a mad dash to that light bridge, and yet another dash across it. When you reach the other side, make a final run for the northern wall (try to avoid the electric walls). Hopefully, you'll reach the right control panel, and you can just zap those incoming marines goodbye. That takes care of the time limit; now you just have to worry about getting yourself out of the level. But that should be no problem for a soldier with your training.

SELF-DESTRUCTION

Mission nine isn't so hard, because you have a greater time limit (15 minutes), but people are confused as to how to do it. First, travel east. Once you reach the large room, go south in order to gain



HASTA LA VISTA, BABY You can use your new, more powerful weapons on the police and robots, who don't leave anything of worth behind anyway.

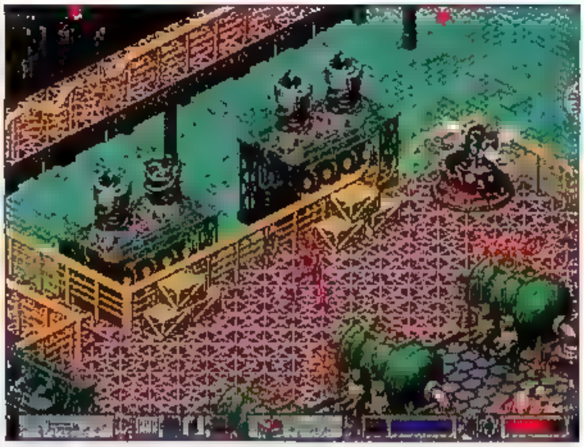
DO OVERWEIGHT MEN IN LITTLE PINK TUTUS EXCITE YOU? ARE SADISTIC CLOWNS YOUR IDEA OF A GOOD TIME?

?

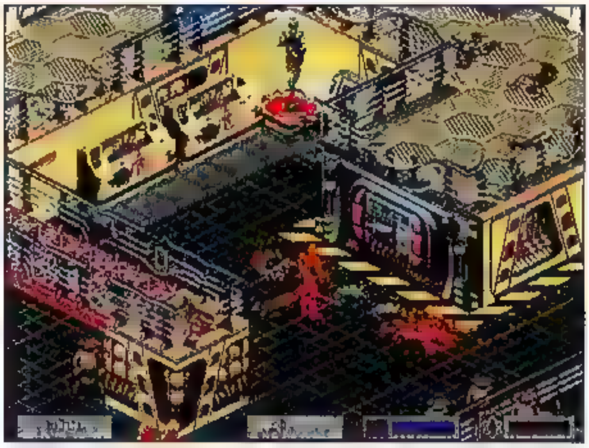
DO YOU THINK SHEEP ARE KINDA SEXY? ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY'RE DOLLED UP IN HEELS AND FORM-FITTING LATEX?

HEY W
YOUR GAME H
TOONS

EIRDO.
AS ARRIVED.
TRUCK.



POWER HUNGRY Always try to hit power generators early, because chances are they're powering a shield for a turret or a camera

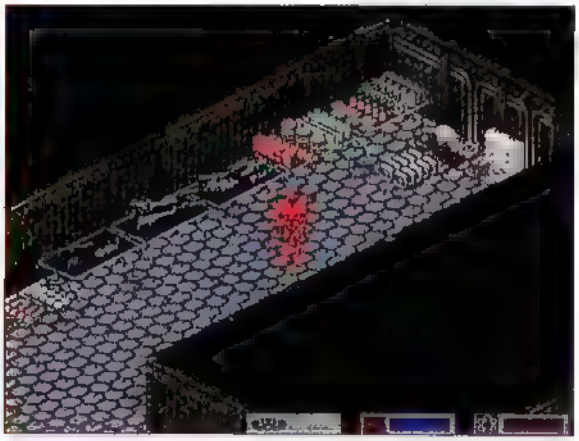


SELF-DESTRUCT This is the actual computer core; just walk up and "use" it to negate the 15-minute time limit in level eight.

access to the elevator platform. Continue east until you hit a laser field. Enter the room that requires the yellow key, and *immediately* roll to one side to avoid the rockets poised at the door. Kill everyone in the room, then use the computer to the far west (it's in its own alcove) to shut off the laser field. If you triggered the force field for this room, just use the panel on the west wall (it's behind a planet, near the foot-locker) and walk out.

You're near the objective, but also at the complicated part. First, proceed north on the catwalk. If you try to go east down the stairs, you'll likely trigger the laser field, which must be deactivated. As you go north, you'll see the floor panel that triggers another laser field; jump over it to save some hassle. If you *do* end up triggering that field, the switch to deactivate it is to the east, on a little catwalk. Now, continue to follow that catwalk until you get to another console; this one will deactivate the laser field on the stairs. After deactivating the laser field, carefully make your way back to the stairs.

As you go down the stairs, be sure to jump over the step with the hand sign, or you'll re-trigger the laser field you just deactivated.



WHERE'S THE BUNNY? The easter egg room is located at the end of mission six, where you'll be treated to a special scene and some prize goodies.

When you get down the stairs, proceed north until you run into a massive, door-like object. This is your mission objective: simply "use" the computer core, and the self destruct sequence ends. After stopping the self-destruct sequence, prepare to finish this level and then hop onto the last level to save the Moon.

END OF THE ROAD

Okay soldier, that's it for this round. Hopefully you've learned and refined the tactics mentioned above, and now know how to solve the two hardest puzzles in the game (besides killing the boss, but that's a different story...). Now, get going! Armstrong may have landed on the Moon, but no one can stop you from coming back to clean up the mess.

Silencer and Pagan

As in the original CRUSADER, there's an Easter Egg room here packed with goodies. It's near the end of mission six (destroying the Di-Cor refinery). Here's how to get there:

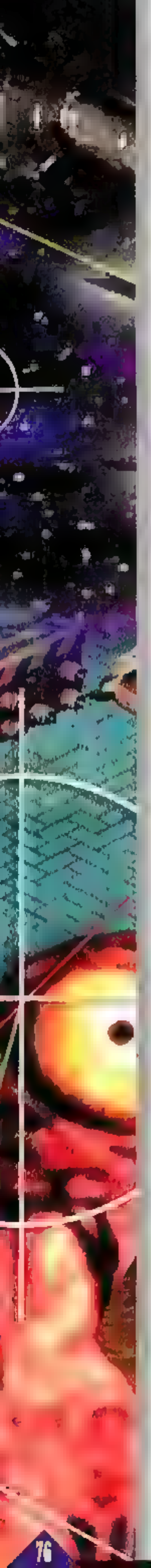
Once you reach the Di-Cor refinery, instead of dropping the Fusion-Pac, jump across the conveyor belts to the other side. Then walk south (just follow the path) until you reach a small, isolated area near a vending machine.

Take a few steps northwest of the vending machine, and a secret door should open, revealing a teleporter. Walk into this teleporter, and you'll be teleported to the No Regret Easter Egg.

Walk up the middle hallway to reach the tables full of goodies. Feel free to loot the place. Then, for fun, walk up the hallway on the right. A door will open up, and you'll be treated to a scene starring the Silencer, an Ultima 8-esque Pagan, and Tony Zurovec (the designer). Don't worry, this isn't like the No Remorse Easter Egg; after viewing it you can jump back into the teleporter and finish the level properly.

If you want to jump there easily, without all the complicated stepping and searching, start the game with the command "regret -warp 6 -egg 20," and you'll instantly warp there.

You may also want to try No Regret's cheat code, LOOSECANNON16. Also, try typing JASSICA16 and you'll be treated to yet another (less amusing) Easter Egg.



Taking Control

Save Star Control 3's Galaxy And Make New Friends With These Handy Hints

by Elliott Chin

Spoiler Alert

These tips practically give away the story of Star Control 3, so if you really want to enjoy the game, only use these hints as a last resort. Star Control 3's ending is a big letdown, so it's the journey and not the ending that's the real fun of the game.

Playing Star Control 3 is like putting on the giant shoes of Captain Kirk for a full season of *Star Trek*. You'll explore strange new worlds, meet new civilizations, and boldly go where no other science fiction game has gone before–into the realm of wacky humor, colony management, and frenzied hypermelee. Of course, even Captain Kirk had a little help in the form of the passionate Doctor McCoy and the logical Vulcan, Mr. Spock. It's only fair, then, that you have a little help on your five-year voyage, too.

DON'T CALL THEM DAKS This will only make them violent. Destroy all Daktaklakpak, because each planet they guard has a Precursor artifact.

WE CAN'T STAND PAIN Once the Spathi join the Crux, threaten them and they will give you helpful Crux secrets.

THE HUNDRED-DAY BORE

The first hundred days of your command are fairly uneventful. Make sure you destroy all Daktaklakpak ships you encounter. Once you've destroyed all the Daktaklakpak you meet, your tech team will decipher their language. Don't worry, you'll meet more later to test your new Dak interpreter. When you do, tell them you will hunt for Precursor and Eternal One artifacts for them, and they will let you live.

At the same time, the VUX will mount repeated raids on the Mycon homeworld every 31 days. You'll find out later how they're achieving this seemingly impossible feat, but for now, answer all Mycon distress calls and destroy any VUX raiders you run into. After you stop three attacks, the raids will stop.

You'll want to explore this quadrant in search of the five Kessari Quadrant races and the six Crux races. After you've met the five of the six Crux races living in the Kessari Quadrant, Eltanin will collapse. Go there to investigate, but be prepared to face a Crux battle fleet. They will appear soon after with a great armada composed of ships from all six Crux races, ready to declare war on the League.

You're Fighting to protect good and Restore the Rightful King to Power.
The Bad News is you're the guy on the right.
"Clever, an utterly different vision and experience from all the lookalike games..." —NEWSDAY
the Neverhood
Neverhood

The good news is you're [illegible] than the guy on the left. Good thing, go exploring [illegible] solve more than 50 puzzles in order to succeed in [illegible], clay-animated world of Neverhood. You'll help Klayman avoid pits [illegible] kick a little clay butt. All to defeat the evil Klogg and bring the Neverhood back to normal. At least, as normal as it ever gets. [illegible]

DREAMWORKS INTERACTIVE

"[illegible] clay [illegible] [illegible] breaks [illegible]"

SPINELESS SPATHI

Soon after the war starts, the Crux will start bullying the Spathi, who will eventually succumb to the threats and defect. Let them defect. You can make the Spathi's cowardice work for you, threaten to kill them once they join the Crux and they will divulge Crux secrets to stave off your attacks. They can tell you where to find the missing Ultron pieces, reveal the Doog and Clairconctlar debts, give you insight into the Harika disease, and tell you what the Dak have done with the Mmrnmhrm Mother Ark

THE BETTER PART OF VALOR To escape this first Crux armada at Eltanin, go there as soon as it collapses and then immediately jump to another star system. Your tech team will still report their findings, but you'll leave before the Crux ships arrive.

DUH, US DOOG Ask the Spathi about the Doog debt and then buy out each Doog colony. They'll give you an anti-matter containment grid and join the League.

THE HOPELESS UTWIG

When the Utwig report their Ultron stolen (by the VUX), visit the Pkunk, who will point you to Erato 6, where you will find VUX renegades and a broken Ultron. Return to the Pkunk and they will tell you to find the Ivory Sheath, Marble Flange, and Crystal Plate to repair the Ultron. The Pkunk will point you to the Plate, the Spathi will find the Flange for you, and the Daktaklakpak know where the Sheath is (on Caduceus 1). However, the Ultron won't be fully repaired until you find the very last piece, which the VUX will give you only after you've found their genetic material and joined them with the Vyro-Ingo (this happens very late in the game).

THE FUNGUS KNOWN AS MYCON

Once your tech team discovers that the Deep Children are sentient, go to the Mycon and demand to speak to a Deep Child. They'll put one in orbit at Janus 1, and it will join you, provided you concede that it is sentient. Then revisit the Mycon and tell them they must stop mind-wiping the Deep Children. They will refuse and join the Crux. Much later in the game, after you've re-evolved the Precursor, the Precursor will ask you whether you think the Deep Children should be free or subordinate to the Mycon. If you want to free the Deep Children, the Precursor will tell you that you can use the Plasma Regrover to do so.

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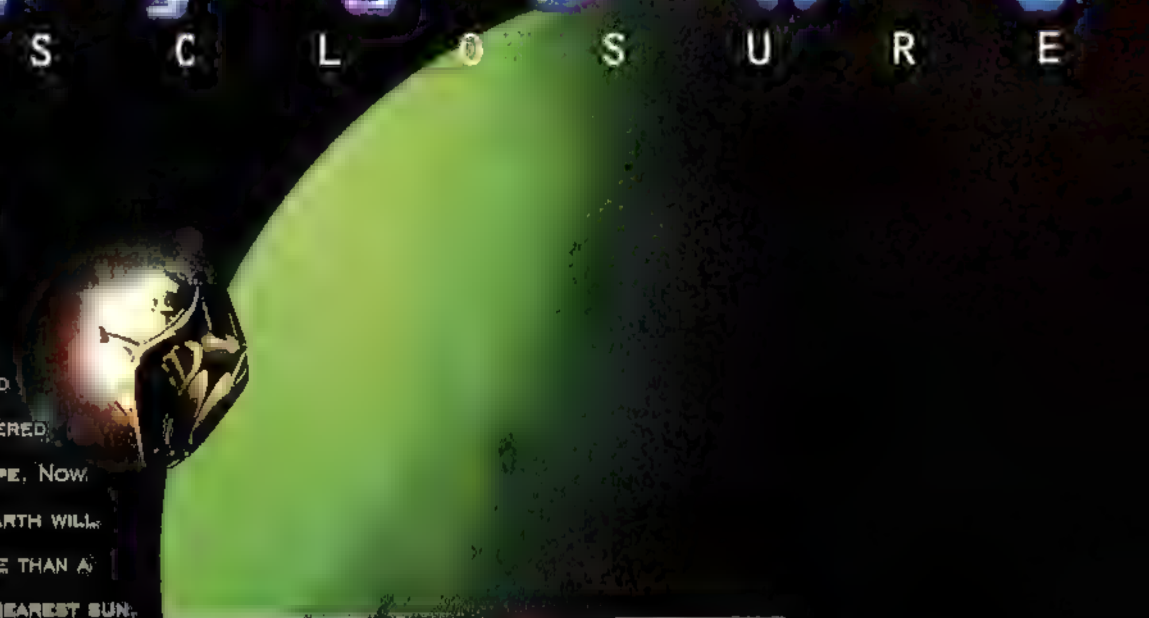

THE YEAR IS 2020,
AND THE EARTH'S OZONE
LAYER IS CRUMBLING.
AS MANKIND HANGS ON
THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION,
A SUB-SPACE PROBE NAMED
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ONE LAST GLIMMER OF HOPE. NOW
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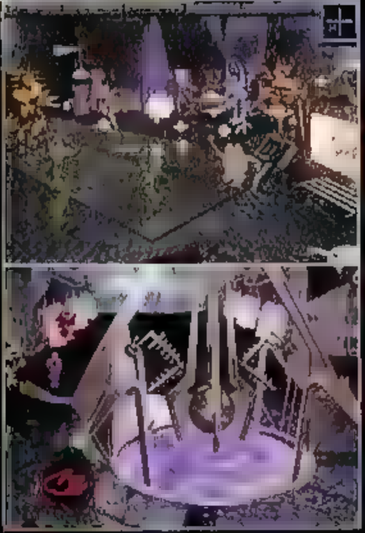
BASED ON THE SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT



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How did we come up with the exciting new features found in Destruction Derby 2?
By accident.
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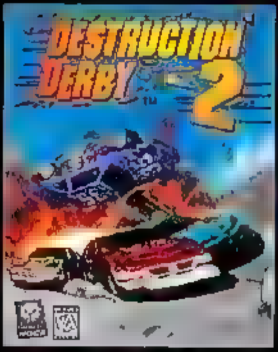
01:00:17:03


DESTRUCTION DERBY 2

WE BE XCHAGGER Make sure when you cure the Harika you also save the Xchaggers, because you'll need them to perform microsurgery on the Mmmmrhm

After this talk, all you need to do is go to the orbit screen in any Mycon system, or talk to a Mycon colony, and use the artifact. The Deep Children will thus be freed and join the League. They are in all game terms identical to the Mycon.

CHMMR BIFURCATION

Sometime during the first hundred days of the war, the Daktaklakpak will tear the Chmmr race apart with their bifurcator, a device that separates the Chmmr into their two component parts, the Chenjesu and the Mmrnmrhm. Once that's done, all your Avatars will be abandoned and all your Chmmr crewmen gone. To rejoin the Chenjesu and Mmrnmrhm, you need to ask the Syreen to reawaken the Chenjesu part, retrieve the Mmrnmrhm Mother Ark piece from Calypso 1, have the Mmrnmrhm pieces repaired by the Xchaggers, and then get the Sun Device from the Lk to accelerate the rejoining process. The Clairconctlar and Spathi will give you clues about the Mother Ark and the Owa will give you a vessel to explore Calypso 1, which is a Rainbow World and usually inaccessible due to its radiation levels

THE EXQUIVAN NOTHINGNESS

A few weeks after the war, you'll be told to find the Exquivan, an enigmatic Kessari race. They are very strange, and will attack you at first. Defeat them, but continue talking to them. You will need their help when you have to save the Pkunk from their doldrums. They will also offer you insight into the Clairconctlar shame and will eventually join you after the Precursors reveal that the Exquivan's nothingness of mind will not save them from the Eternal Ones.

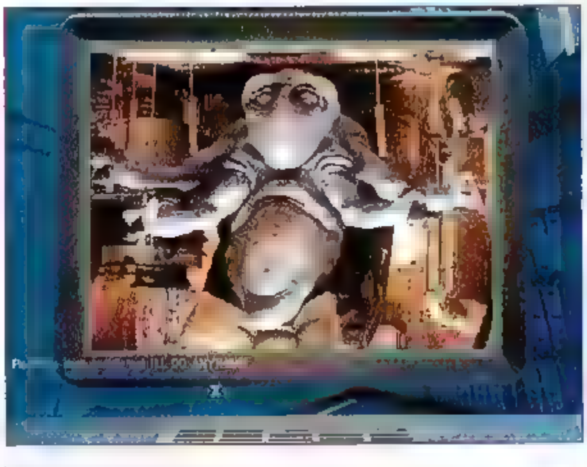
SUBPLOT DELUGE

One hundred days after the war starts, the third star system will collapse at Picus. If you investigate, you'll find some Orz at the sight, who will tell you that the Syreen are mind controlling the League. You can confront the Syreen, but remember that the Orz are lying and that the Syreen are only trying to help. If you kick them out, though, remember to ask them to rejoin after the war ends, because at that time the Orz will try to mind attack the League and only the Syreen will be able to defend you.

Soon, the Pkunk will start entering a funk. It is being caused by a crashed Precursor ship on the Exquivan homeworld of Anshar 3. Before you can explore that site and retrieve the item that is plaguing the Pkunk, you'll need the Syreen to temporarily make your tech team mindless so the Exquivan will let you explore the planet surface. You'll find the Precursor data pack there with the true name of the Eternal Ones.

DAK-DAK-DAK-A-GAK

Take the Precursor data pack and use it against the Dak as a bargaining tool to find out about the Celestial Un-Devolver on Bergeren 2. Then, give the data pack to the Daktaklakpak in return for the Variance Key, which you will take to Bergeren 2 and use to re-evolve the Precursor. Of



DON'T CRUSHIFY US Use the Eternal One True Name to get the K'tang Missile and blow away the King's armor. He'll then cough up some Ploxis ships.

The countdown
has begun.
Only you
can stop
the invasion.
THE ARRIVAL
CD-ROM ADVENTURE

course, you'll need to find a Precursor, but your tech team will tell you who they are, so you know where to look (think Xchagger host).

You also need to trade the true name of the Eternal Ones to other Daktaklakpak ships to gain the K'tang King Missile. Take the missile to Argus 5, detonate it, and bully the real K'tang King. He'll give you the Ploxis ships at Pauguk and the code to turn the Daktaklakpak into service drones. You need these Ploxis ships to sneak into the Ploxis headquarters at High Point 1.

BREAKING THE CRUX

To cure the Harika, you'll need to talk to the Spathi, the Dak, the K'tang, and the Harika themselves. You'll find that the Xchagger plague is actually a sentient race on Zosma 6 who you'll want to bring into the League. Send a tech team to examine them, go get a few comatose Harika bodies from the Harika, and then get a hive ship from the

Where Is Everybody?

The first thing to do when the game starts, aside from setting up a few colonies in the Helios system, is to find the lost League races. The Spathi are the closest to your location, while the farthest are the Utwig and Chmmr. Here is a list of the League races and their homeworlds.

League Races

Spathi	Goshen 4
VUX	Salacia 2
Syreen	Astarte 1
Pkunk	Arcadia 6
Ur-Quan	Velpunia 6
Mycon	Janus 8
Chmmr	Hypnus 2
Utwig	Formalhaut 5
Orz	Muhlifain 7

Crux Races

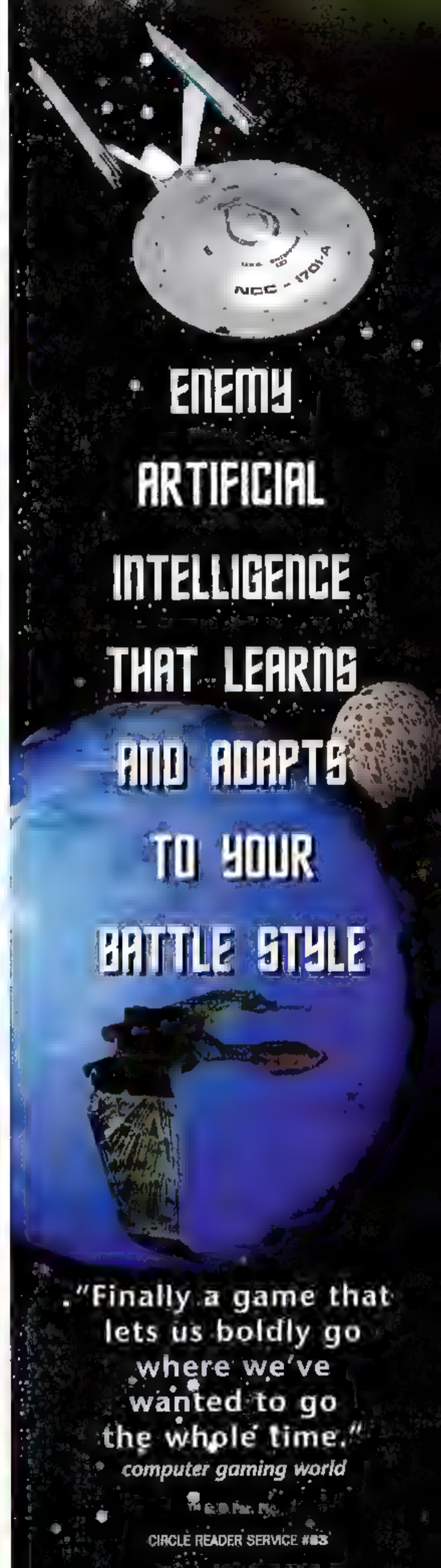
Clairconctlar	Cronos 7, Enkidu 7
Doog	Adapa 1, Cerberus 1, Chloris 1, Izanami 2, Melpomene 4, Proserpina 1
Harika	Gienah 1, Typhon 3
K'tang	Argus 5
Ploxis Rebel Base	Xipe 1

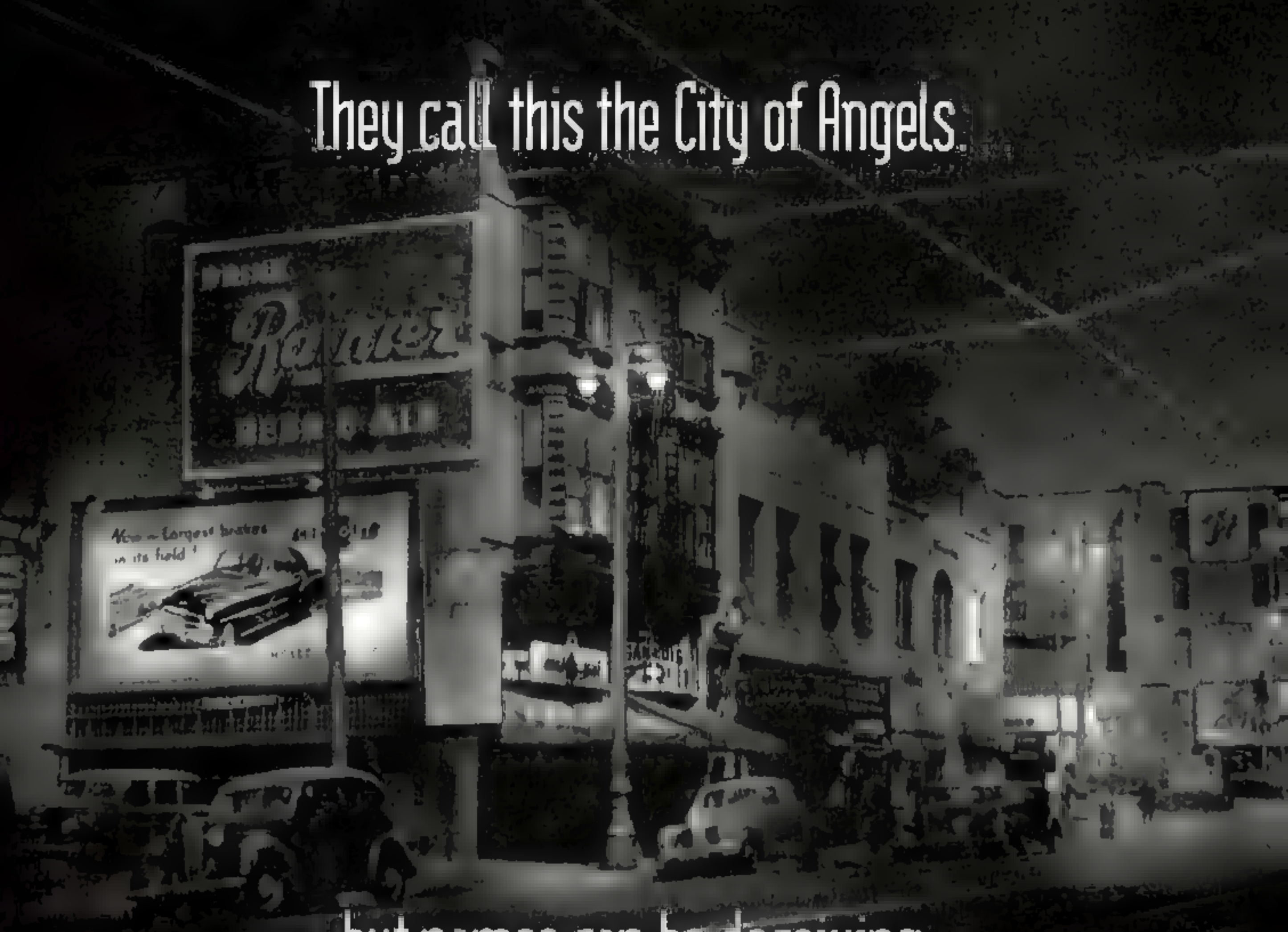
Kessari Races

Exquivan	Anshar 3
Lk	Haven (Quasi Portal G)
Owa	Mnemosyne 1
Vyro-Ingo	Izanagi 5
Xchagger	Zosma 6

Rainbow Worlds

Alula 1
Calypso 1
Euterupe 1
Ganesha 1
Indra 1
Kentaurus 1
Moria 1
Penates 1
Rodia 1




Now — Largest brakes in its field

NOIR

Xchaggers. A few days later, you'll cure the Harika and save the Xchagger people. Cure both Harika planets and they will join you

To free the Clairconctlar, you need to talk to the Spathi, K'tang, and Exquivan. You'll learn that the Crux is holding the Clair Queen captive on Warp Station Klashog (Enkidu 4c). Go there, retrieve a Conc Rock from the dig site, and show it to the Clairconctlar. You can give it to them if you'd like. Once you visit the Lk, they'll tell you that the Clairconctlar will follow you if you break the Rock. Go to the Clairconctlar, threaten to break the Conc Rock, and then flee to Enkidu 4c. When they arrive, they'll see their Queen and be released from their servitude.

You'll find the Lk on the other side of Quasi Space Portal G, located in the Azazel system. They won't trust you until you retrieve the Red Spiral Rail artifact for them from the heavily guarded planet Antaeus 1. Once you earn the Lk's trust, they'll give you the Sun Device for rejoining the Chmmr

MASTERS OF THE RAINBOW WORLDS

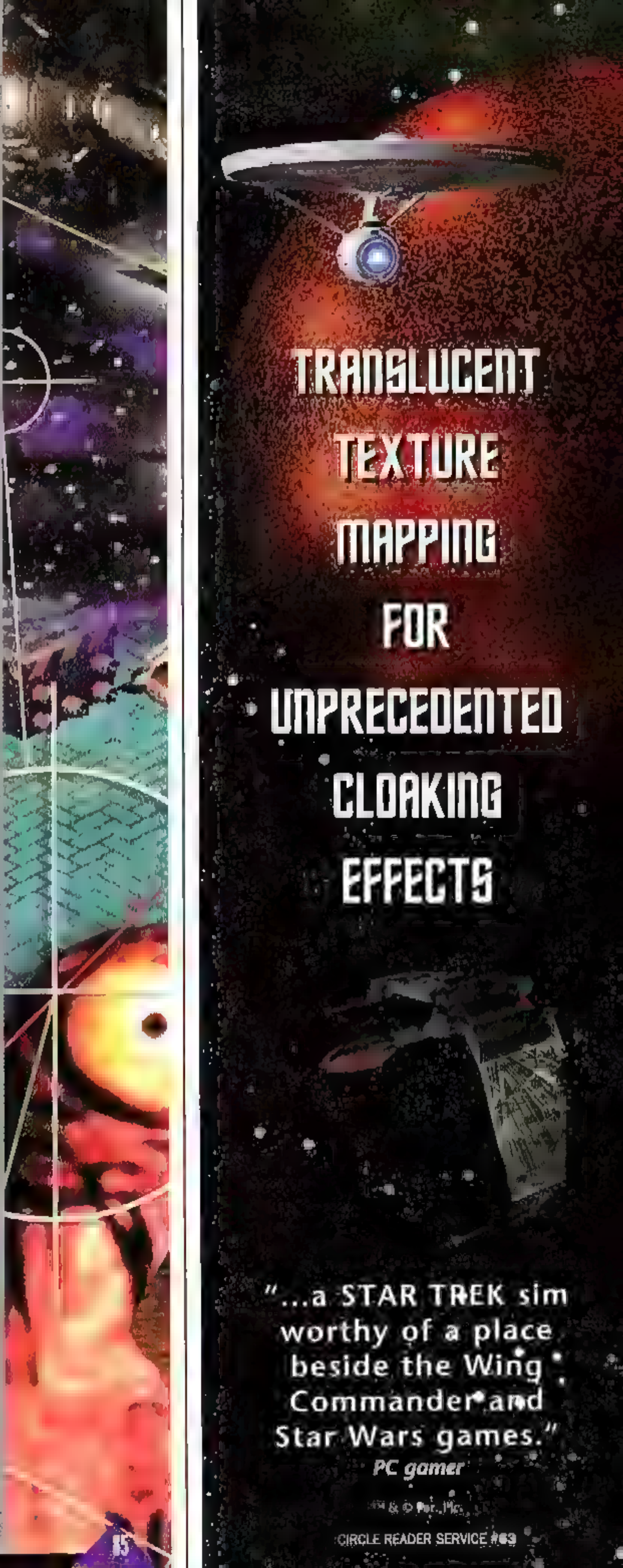
To explore the Rainbow Worlds, you need to talk to the Owa. First, visit a

Managing Colonies

It is vital that you build enough colonies to provide you fuel for traveling the stars, landing pods for creating colonies, and dig sites and ships for combat

The first rule of thumb is to specialize your colonies. Have a few colonies (usually the Ur-Quan, Chmmr, and Utwig) make ships and have all the other colonies make fuel. For the fuel colonies, move the slider to zero value for ships and research, and max out fuel. You should also have two or three colonies solely creating landing pods. Always have your mine, factory, and refinery slider bars at full. If you need to move resources to ship-building planets, you can always get excess resource units from those planets that aren't making any ships because they will usually have a surplus. Don't worry; colonies will continue to replenish their RUs, so take as much as you like.

You also don't want to spread your colonies too thin. If one of the race's star systems has more than one bountiful world, create additional colonies there. Since an alien race lives there, you are bound to visit that system anyway, and since you don't expend fuel within a system, you won't have to waste fuel going to the additional colony for supplies. Make sure you do visit each colony within a star system, since you have to physically orbit each colony to gain the fuel supplies there.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FOR
UNPRECEDENTED
CLOAKING
EFFECTS
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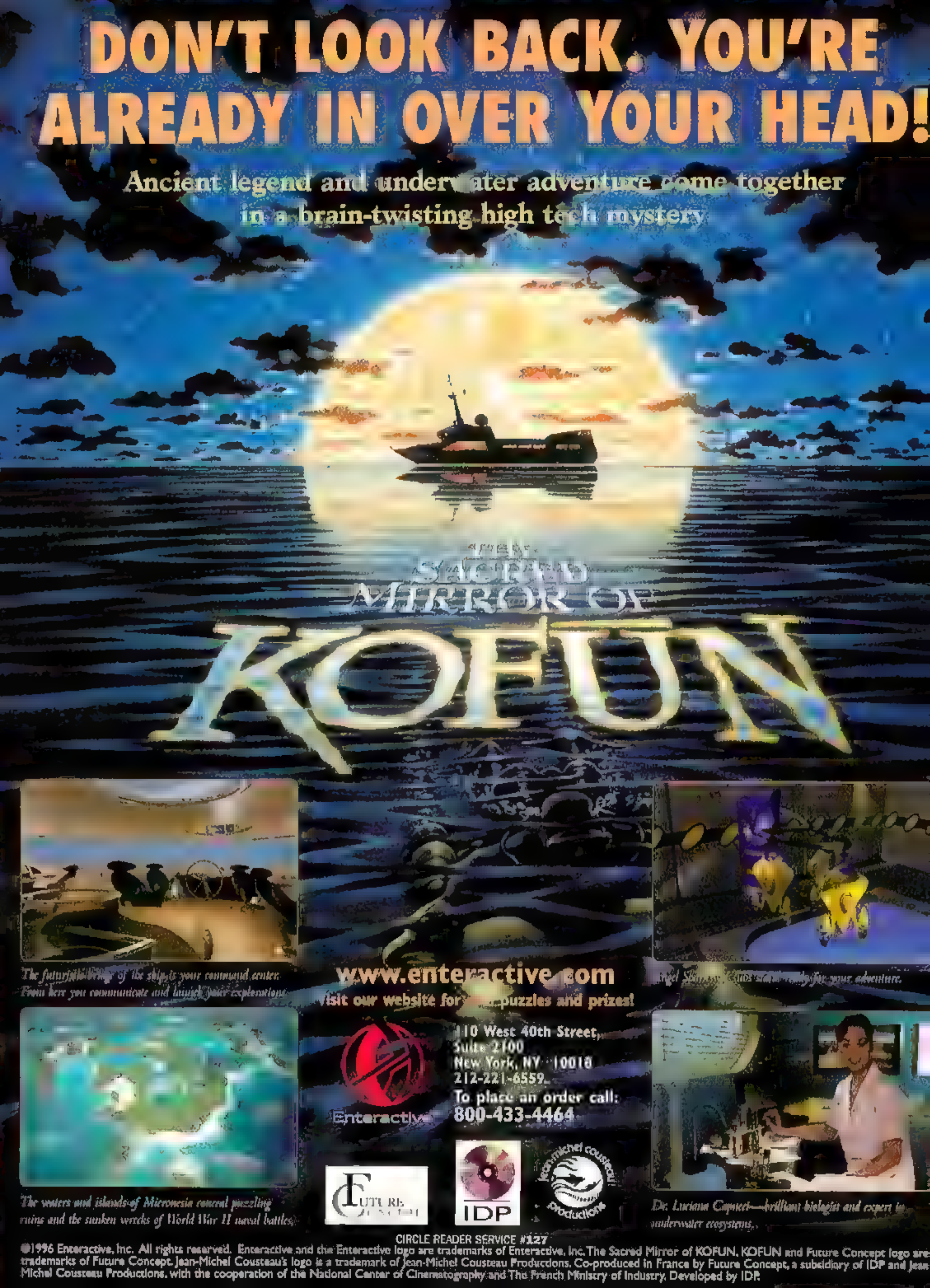

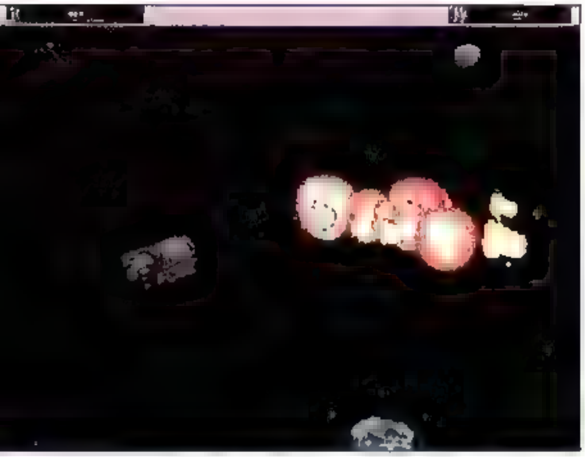

MASTERING THE MELEE For strategies in hypermelee, turn to this month's Action Column

Rainbow World and battle an Owa fleet. Then ask the Harika for the Owa homeworld location. Meet the Owa reef master and relate to him the tragic deaths of his people. He'll give you an explorer for searching the Rainbow Worlds, an anti-matter scoop for collecting the anti-matter on the Rainbow surfaces, and a password to get past each Rainbow World's Owa guardians. Use the Owa explorer to excavate a data pack on Alula 1 that reveals the Daktaklakpak origin and the purpose of the Celestial Un-Devolver.

Late in the game, you can join the Vyro-Ingo and the VUX. First, get the Vyro-Ingo to join the League by saying the Ploxis have insulted them. Your tech teams will discover DNA matrixes for both races. Talk to the Lk about the two matrixes and they will tell you that they should be joined. Go to Salacia with a Vyro-Ingo ship, detach that single ship, and send it to meet a VUX ship. The two vessels will join, and the VUX will suddenly be nice and give you the last piece of the Ultron.

THE FINAL HOUR

To end the war, go to the Ploxis Rebel Base at Quasi Space Portal F (the Xipe system). Retrieve the frozen rebels and take at least one crewed Ploxis ship to High Point 1 (the Chmmr will give you the coordinates to the planet). Once there, jettison the anti-matter containment grid (which should be 100 percent full from the Rainbow Worlds' anti-matter). Then fight the Ploxis Precursor ship to end the war.

Days later, the Orz will attack (remember to have the Syreen on your side), and then the Eternal One's Heralds will arrive. Destroy them with Utwig ships and then retrieve the Sentience Thresher from their leader. You will need to create an efficient Sentience Collector in order to sate the appetites of the Eternal Ones. To do that, you need the Sentience Thresher, the Sentience Collator (your tech team will find it after you find the Ploxis Rebel Base), the Sentience Notation Device (the Precursor gives it to you), and the Ebon Hinge (can be excavated at Muhlifain 2). Combine them to form the Sentience Collector and then fill it up with at least 13 sentiences. Provided you finish all their story lines, up to 17 races will be available as donors (seven simply can't).

You'll have several weeks to collect the different artifacts and sentiences, but once you do, you'll feed the ethereal Eternal Ones, stave off galactic destruction, and make the universe safe once again for peace-loving sentients all across the Milky Way.

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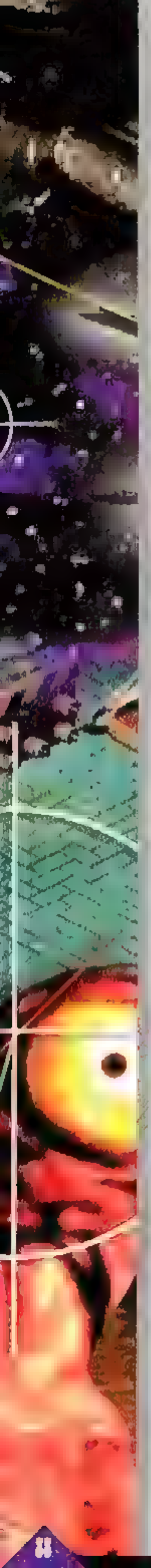


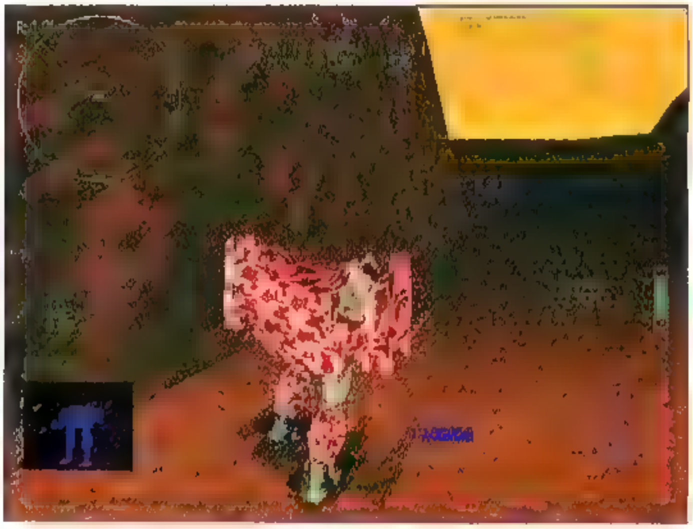
Battle Mechs

Mercenary Killing: A How-To Guide

by Greg Fortune

Climbing into an 80 ton, four-story walking tank with enough firepower to level a city, you peer down at the enormous jointed legs, panning up to examine the turret packed with long-range missiles and high-power lasers. You're going out looking for trouble, because trouble is what pays the bills. Before the day is done you'll either emerge from the battle victorious or die atop the smoldering wreckage of your Mech. Welcome to the 31st century.

What does it take to survive in the hostile environment of MechWarrior 2: Mercenaries? Skill, coordination, strategy, and lots of practice. This guide isn't designed to give you packaged solutions. You won't find charts, graphs, tables, or cheat codes, because I hope you never need them. The goal here is to provide you with some concepts and techniques that will help you improve your Mech piloting skills. While winning isn't everything, it beats getting your tail blown off every time.



AGAINST THE WALL Let the terrain take some abuse for you. This guy's gonna take some damage before he forces you out into the open.

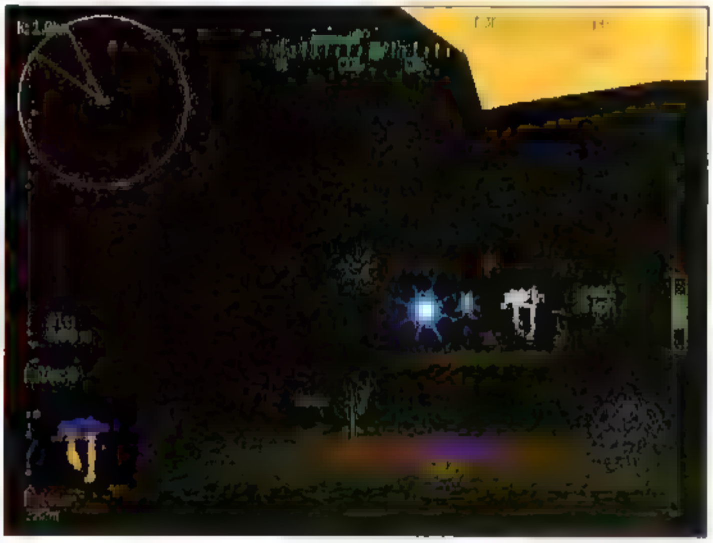
CONTROL YOURSELF

One of the most important aspects of successful Mech combat is control. No matter how good you are at attack and defense strategizing, if you can't execute the maneuvers quickly and precisely, your expensive Mech is still going to end up a pile of slag.

The most effective control setup I've found combines a set of rudder pedals and a throttle controller with a standard keyboard and three button mouse.

Configure the pedals to steer the chassis and the mouse to control the twisting and tilting of the turret. The mouse buttons can be configured to control firing, grouping, and selecting weapons. The throttle takes care of chassis speed and just about everything else. If you have a joystick, you may want to stick it aside until you boot a flight sim; it can't offer the precise control of the mouse. With this setup you shouldn't need to take your hands off the controls from the time you launch until the mission is complete.

There are many systems built into a Mech, and the idea is to have as many controls instantly available as possible. It's hard enough being in battle with the odds stacked against you. The last thing you need is to have to take your hands off of your primary controller and your eyes off of the screen to enter commands with the keyboard. If you play jumping from device to device like that, you are either one heck of a typist or dead a lot. Check the accompanying sidebar, "Control Fetish," for more details about control options.



MICHAEL JACKSON MOVES Try spread patterns with the slower weapons to make evasion a bit more difficult.

SIMCITY 2000 NETWORK EDITION

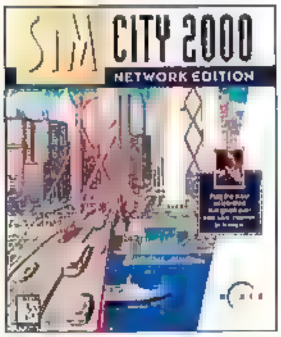
The world's most popular simulation finally gets some competition.

Player 1 is the server that brings the players together—before trying to bring them to their knees in a mad scramble for power.

Player 2 surveys the city looking for suggestions he can make to the group on how best to beautify their burgeoning burg.

Player 3 is in the midst of heated negotiations with Player 1 that could bring some much-needed revenue to her district.

Player 4 checks out the new stadium and power plant he shrewdly got approved at the city's last real-time town meeting.



After years as the only city simulator in town, SimCity 2000 now has some worthy competitors. Namely, you and three friends, competing for resources and revenue over the Internet or a LAN. Or two of you can go head-to-head over a modem. It's the SimCity 2000 Network Edition—now ready to compete for your free time.

When you're building a mega-metropolis, two heads (or three or four) are better than one. So import saved SimCity 2000 cities or start a new urban sprawl. Chat live with your connected commissioners. Wheel and deal for property and vote in town meetings.

Or forget back-scratching and try back-stabbing—in a shameless grab for political power. **The Network Edition. Not just multi-layered. It's multi-played.**

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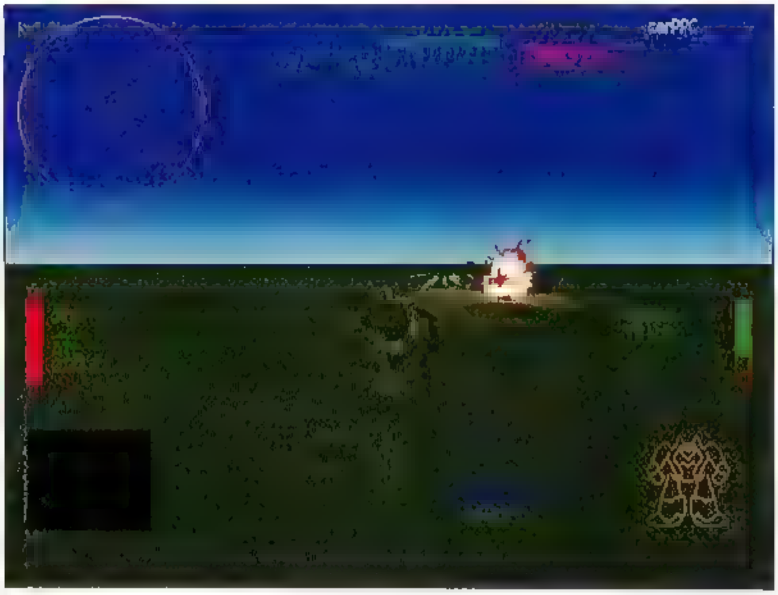

SMOOTH BEATS PRETTY If your graphics card can't take the heat turn off some of the options to get a better frame rate. The game will still look great, and you'll have a much better chance of survival.

BASIC STRATEGIES

Your tactics should vary greatly based upon the speed, weight and weapon systems of your chosen Mech. Remember to use terrain to gain an advantage, especially if you have jump jets and your opponent doesn't. If you have long range weapons, you'll want to make the best of them. Try to position yourself so the landscape will slow your opponent's progress toward you, increasing the number of opportunities you'll have to get a shot in. A series of small hills or similar terrain works well--just be sure to aim for the top of the hill and fire while your target is still progressing up the slope, so that the enemy Mech gets hit as soon as it reaches the top.

The classic strategy when closing on a target is to point your chassis about 45 degrees off of your target and twist your torso so that your weapons are brought to bear. In MERCENARIES, enemy AI Mechs can now lead you with theirs shots as well, so we have to add a new wrinkle to this strategy for it to be effective: speed variations. If you can keep your speed fairly variable, you'll keep a lot of enemy fire from hitting you. This is because the enemy AI leads based on your current speed and direction, and if that speed changes you've nullified that calculation.

If you have a throttle, this tactic should be easy to implement. If you don't, spend some time figuring out how to optimally configure your keyboard throttle configuration. One technique that might help is using the forward/reverse toggle to change your speed. As you're running, kick your Mech into reverse. Before you stop completely, slam it forward again and you'll accelerate to your previous speed. This works particularly well against PPCs at a distance.

With all of the Mech design variations in this game, you may be wondering which are the best and worst designs, and which weapons to load on them. Instead of giving you a guide to the hot Mech/weapon combos, though, my advice is "know thine enemy." Although some of the designs are deathtraps I encourage you to play a couple of missions in them anyway. Yes, drive the deathtraps. You will gain a much deeper knowledge of a Mech design if you try to use it as opposed to just blowing it up. Only by experiencing the weaknesses firsthand will you truly understand how to disassemble a Mech design most effectively on the battlefield. Just be sure to make liberal use of the "save game" feature when driving a substandard Mech!

JUMPING MECH FLASH

Jump jets, when used properly, allow a Mech to quickly make high speed maneuvers in unexpected directions. They are also very useful

SPY IN THE SKY Satellite uplinks can be useful in the city, but the view is usually too narrow to help much out in the open.

THESE REMARKABLE ADVENTURES BEGAN A LONG TIME AGO IN A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY.

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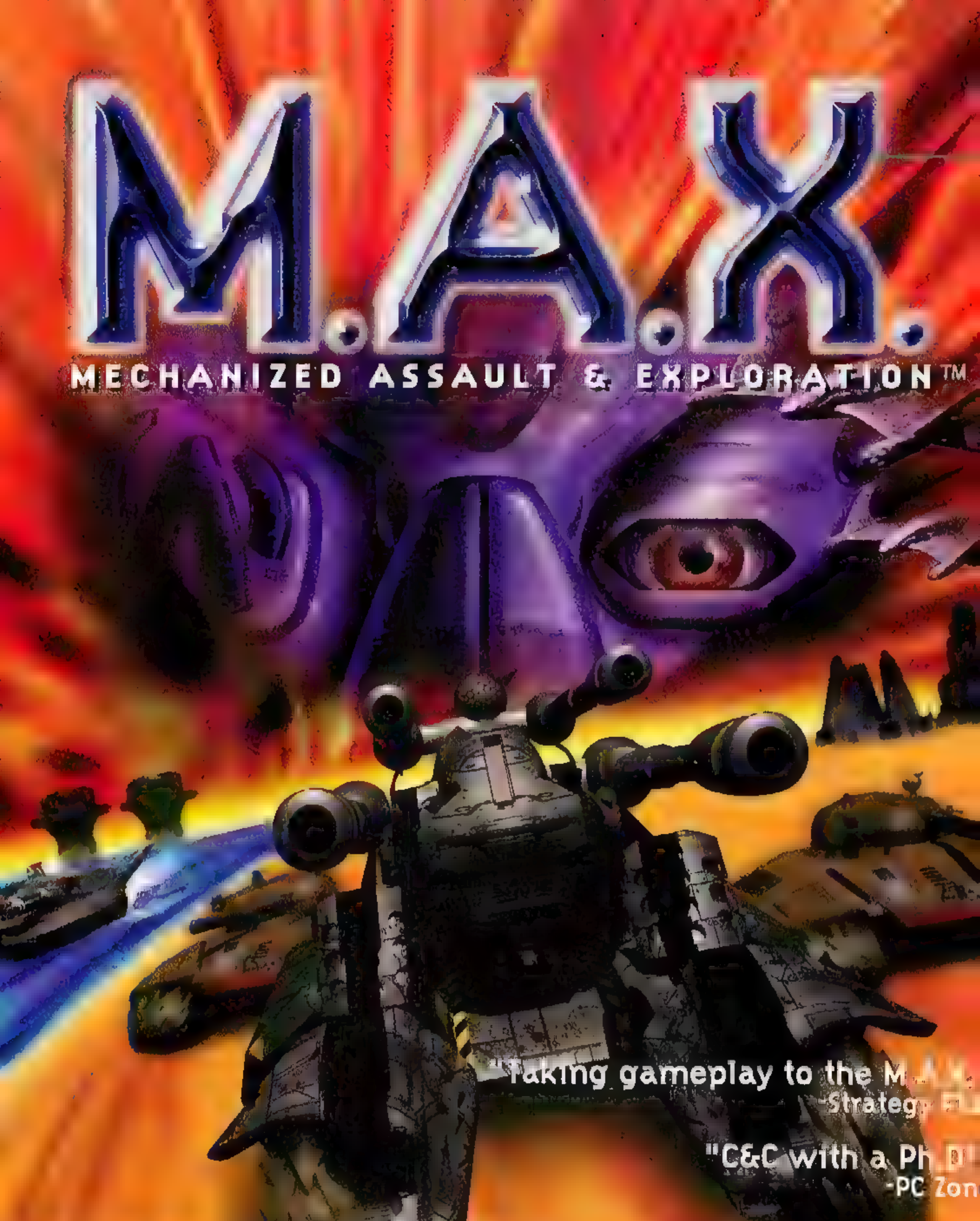
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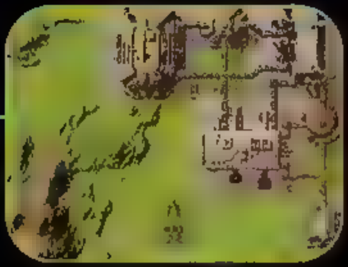
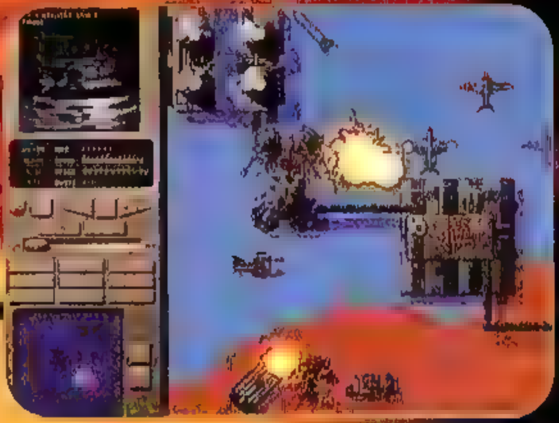
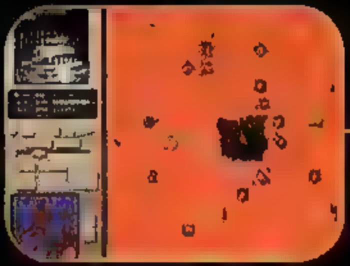


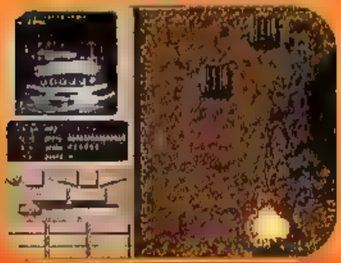
Simultaneous or turn-based gameplay plus adjustable turn length and game speed will challenge both real-time and turn-based strategy gamers



[illegible] VGA graphics and units rendered from 3D models pack an astounding visual punch



Any combination of up to four human or computer opponents can wage war. Battle over a network or clash head-to-head via modem



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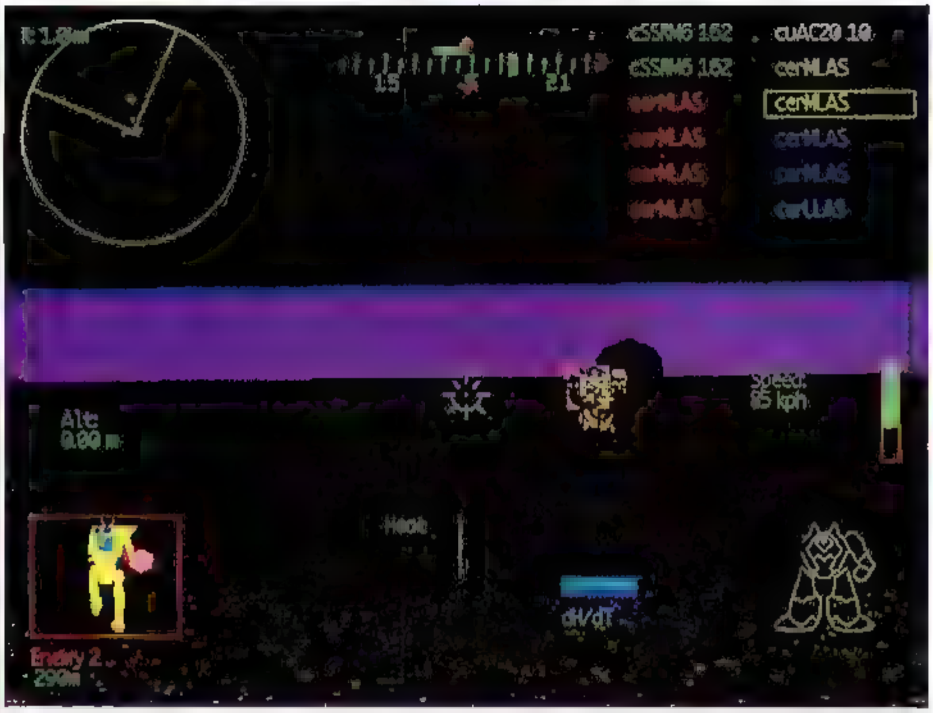


LIGHTS OUT Blew a fuse in your IR system? Now we'll find out if you can fight in the dark

when someone launches a pair of linked SRM 6's at you and you need to get out of the way in a hurry. Here's a couple of my favorite jump jet–based maneuvers and when I use 'em.

"The Monkey on Your Back" is a fun little maneuver I came up with while honing my DFA (Death From Above) skills, and it is now one of my favorite strategies against slow, heavy Mechs. You can do the drive-by version of this maneuver, but I really enjoy the aerial variant. The goal of this maneuver is to jump over the enemy's Mech, twist in the air, and land behind it with all of your weapons charged and pointing up his tail pipe. Then you proceed to free the target Mech's internal systems from the confines of its torso by blowing them out through its chest.

Sound like fun? This is how I do it: As usual, I close the distance at high speed and a 45-degree angle off of the target, to make my enemy's job of leading me a little more difficult. Large Mechs usually have some pretty heavy long-range weaponry, so get close pretty quickly. You'll also want to have your jump jets ready for the next step.

Once you are within a couple hundred meters of your enemy, hit your vertical jump jets so that you have just enough altitude to clear the top of your enemy. As you begin to pass over your target, reduce your throttle to low power, use your turning jets to spin 180 degrees, and apply a little forward jet when the turn is complete.

If all goes well, you'll jump over the top of your enemy and land directly behind it with all of your weapons pointed at that lovely, soft back armor. You don't want to be too close, because the next step is to unload all of your groups, one after the other, into your target before it has a chance to turn around. The P key will fire all weapons in a group and cycle to the next by default, but I've re-mapped that function to a convenient hat position on my CH Pro Throttle for easy access.

As the enemy turns towards you, hit your vertical jump jets again; complete a short burst forward, another 180 degree twist, and another short forward blast. Now you're behind them again, usually with all of your weapons systems cycled and ready to go again.

Pay attention not to where the enemy turret is pointing but to the direction in which the chassis is heading. Try to anticipate where he'll be when you finish your jump and maneuver yourself accordingly. Use your jump jets sparingly, and when you get down to about one-quarter power on your jets, use the rest to get the heck out of there if the enemy is still standing. A word of warning: mess up and you may find yourself standing toe to toe with a really ticked off Dire Wolf–not a fun place to be.

BACK OFF, MAN

In a Mech loaded with PPCs or LRMs, leverage the range of those weapons as much as possible. If you can get into an area

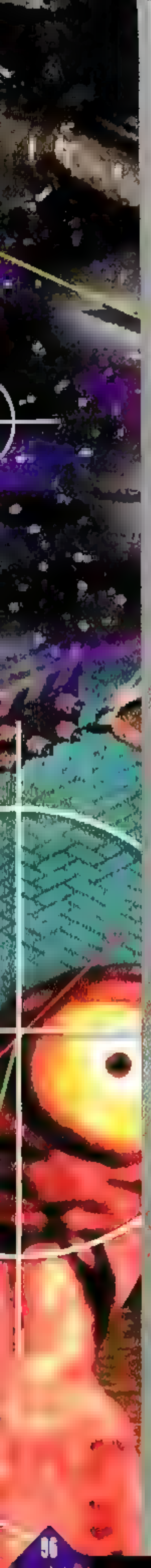
SWM Seeks Lancemate

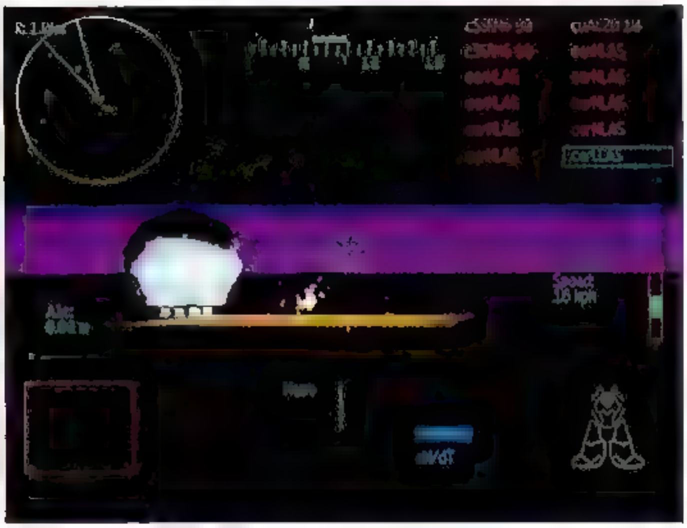
Unlike your starmates in MechWarrior 2 and GBL, all of Mercenaries' Lancemates aren't created equal. Some of them are very good; some of them I wouldn't let shine my Mech's footpads. Regardless of how good the guy on your left may seem, you have to watch them all closely. Even an A+ pilot can screw up, and you should be ready to give them new orders at any time. The good news is that they don't tend to get stuck behind rocks and buildings anymore, so your management tasks are much easier.

Aerotech pilots are another new wrinkle in the game. They can be very effective in taking out turrets, tanks, and armored transports. They can also be useful against enemy Mechs, but don't send them after a Mech without ground support. Unescorted Aerotechs tend to get blown out of the sky by enemy Mechs unless you have another Mech there for your enemy to deal with; you'll go through a lot of Aerotechs if you send them in solo.

Don't send Aerotech pilots in after tall, stationary targets. They use the same AI as your Lancemates, which causes them to get right up next to an object before trying to go around. I had one Aerotech pilot put his nose on a tower and unload his missile racks into it, causing massive splash damage to his craft, death to him, and gales of incredulous laughter to pour from my cockpit. That was a big rookie mistake from a guy who cost 90,000 C-bills a month.

RISK
Trading can be hazardous...





LAST CHANCE It's a good idea to keep a laser in your cockpit or center torso, just in case you lose everything else.

where there is a lot of wide open space behind you, turn your Mech to face the target and as it approaches, fire your weapons and shift into full reverse.

Even the slowest Mech will overtake you in a hurry if you are running in reverse, unless you have jump jets. Bursts of speed from your jets can help you keep your distance while you hit your enemy with long-range weapons and stay out of laser and SRM range. Eventually you'll have to engage in a more conventional fight, but by then your target has probably sustained massive damage and you have a distinct advantage.

POWERING DOWN

These tactics won't work in every situation, but they do demonstrate that, with a little thought, you can combine basic strategies and Mech special abilities to create maneuvers that will surprise and impress your opponents and teammates alike. The goal here is to learn your Mech and expand your skills so that piloting it is as natural as walking down the street. To reach this point, you'll have to spend hours upon hours practicing, but the practice is anything but tedious, and has its own rewards along the way. Your defeats will be experiences to learn from, and your victories will have that sweetness that only comes from a long, hard battle that is well fought. May your plasma burn hot and your enemies grow cold.

Control Fetish

Controllers are a very personal choice. Some gamers live by the mouse; others won't go anywhere without their joystick in hand. Here's this Mech pilot's take on the various controller schemes available in the MechWarrior 2 series.

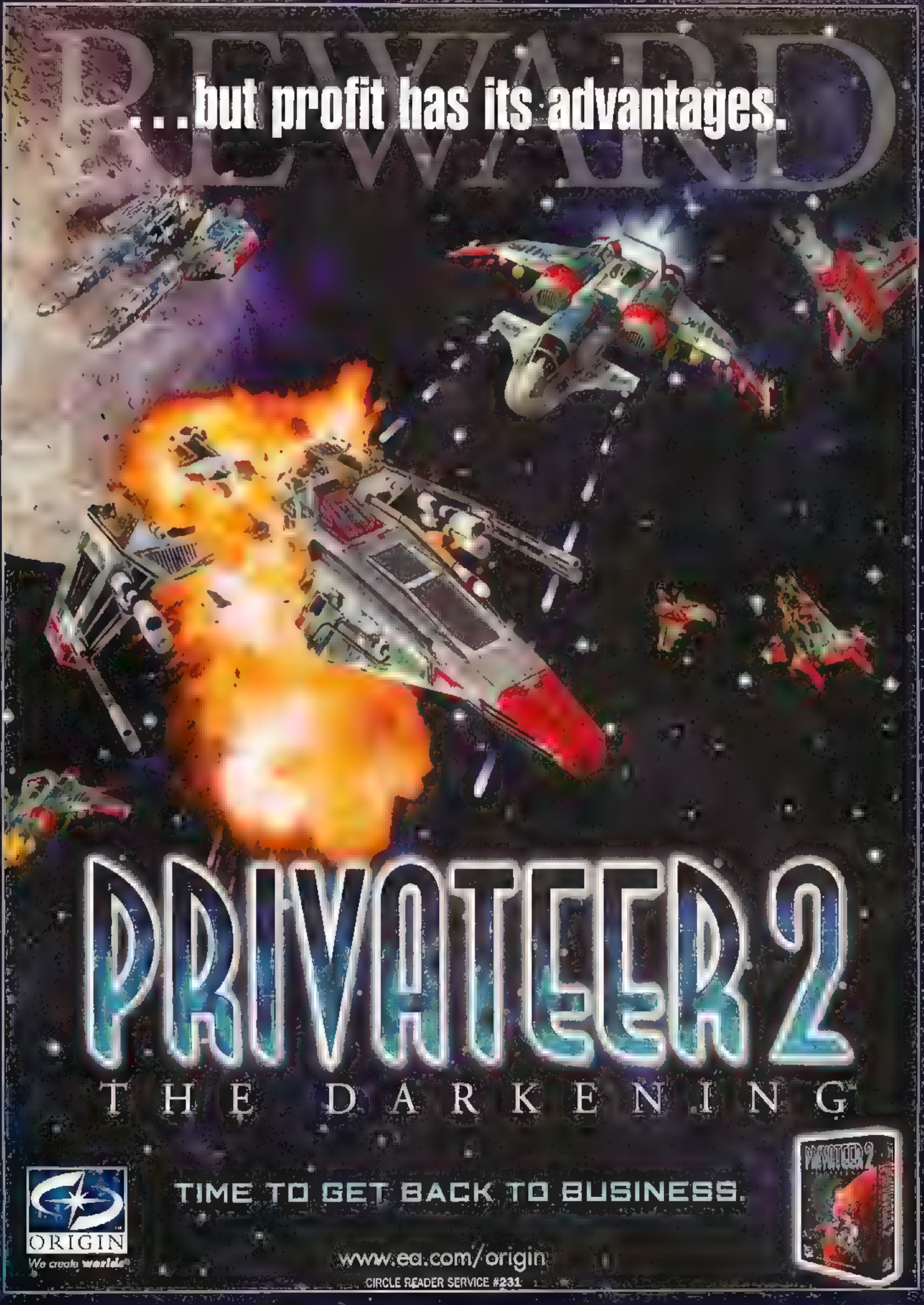
Joystick: If you're willing to spend some time getting used to it, the joystick can be a very effective controller. The main advantage is that the number of buttons available under the thumb of your stick hand–especially on multi-button joysticks like the CH Fighter Stick and Thrustmaster F-16 FLCS–helps keep your hands in place instead of forcing you to spend time hunting for keyboard commands. The auto-centering is a bit awkward, though, and it makes precise targeting a lot more difficult. If you do use the joystick, be sure to calibrate it frequently.

Keyboard: While it's true that you can control every function of your Mech from the keyboard, this isn't the recommended way to go. For most people it's the equivalent of a "kick me" sign in the middle of their back. I played using the keyboard when I first got MechWarrior 2, and I thought I was doing fairly well. Once I started using joysticks and mice I realized how much the keyboard was getting in my way. Now I only use the keyboard to type MERCS and press Enter.

Mouse: Assigning the turret controls to the mouse gives you the ultimate in precision turret control. It's fast, accurate, and doesn't take long to get the hang of. Leading your target properly is the most basic skill one needs to master to be competitive, and using the mouse helps develop that skill faster than anything else I've used.

Throttle: If you can get your hands on a programmable throttle, do so. The CH Pro Throttle I use has four programmable buttons and four fully programmable four-way hat switches. That's 20 functions available under my fingertips at all times. I use the buttons for switching between chain and group-fire modes, selecting nav points, overriding heat shutdown, and toggling forward and backward. The hats control jump jets, target selections, view modes, and zooming. Having split-second access to all of these controls makes all the difference in the world.

Pedals: I use rudder pedals to steer the chassis, because it is intuitive to use your feet to control the direction in which you're walking. Pedals also let you change direction without taking your hands off of the mouse and throttle. The player using all four limbs to defeat his enemy obviously has an advantage over those fighting with just their hands.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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #231

Breaking The Deadlock

Commander Carter Lays Out The Perfect Strategy For Taking Gallius IV

by Tim Carter

DEADLOCK is one of a growing number of games designed from the beginning around multiplayer combat, a game that offers a credible human alternative to often pathetic computer AI. Of course, playing against other humans does have a downside: someone else knows when you lose, and may be apt to rub it in. The solution? Don't lose. At least, don't lose very often.

As you'd expect, the path to success lies with a solid strategy. Overconfident gamers beware, however. Even the best-laid plans can come to pieces at the hands of a crafty opponent–and they can fall apart with amazing speed when you're facing two or more opponents.

CHOOSE YOUR PLOT

The first order of business in DEADLOCK is choosing the right landing site. You want a site that gives you a fair buffer from others, but also places you close to other territories and the seas for expansion and resources (for details, see the sidebar "Plotting for Victory").

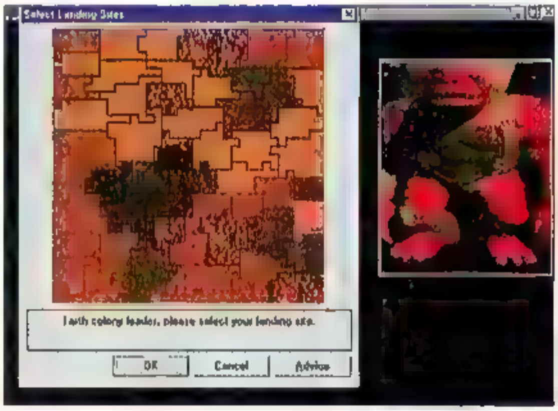
As for races, I greatly prefer the Humans or the Tarth. They are the fastest out of the gate, and many games are too short for the natural advantages of other races to have an effect. The humans get financial bonuses, which can be converted into military power late in the game. The Tarth are just naturally stronger, with more formidable units that make military success easier.

Many gamers seem to prefer the Cyth because of their fixed morale. However, the Cyth operate at a great disadvantage, as the fixed number of unhappy Cyth greatly slow early production and expansion, and maintaining high morale with other races really isn't all that difficult. Because of this, I like to pick a landing site near the Cyth or other weak races, and away from Tarth–unless you want to fight right from the start.

ART, SCHMART

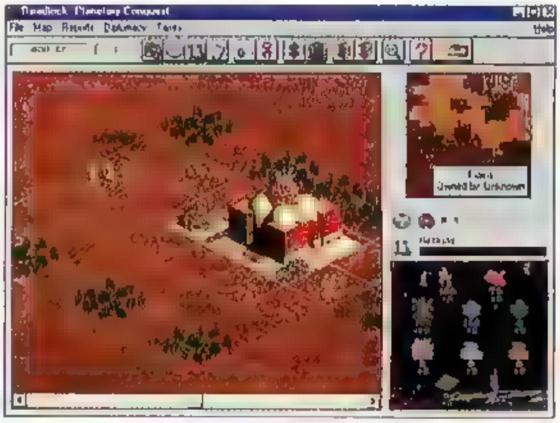
Speaking of morale, get those culture-producing facilities built early, especially in important zones, and then have them upgrade until morale becomes an issue. Plan to overpopulate every zone you can, as the morale loss suffered will easily be compensated by a decently staffed museum. The extra production you gain from fully staffing your facilities is crucial to winning, especially if land space is limited. Also, check your morale as the game progresses. If you have extra culture, use the cushion to raise taxes as high as possible.

Fortify all your zones as soon as possible. This makes your territory



Tarth colony leader, please select your landing site.

READY, TARTH, GO! The Tarth are one of the best races to play. They manifest their special abilities immediately, as their units are simply physically tougher.



ARTS AND CRAFTS You don't need to play the Cyth to get good morale. Staff your culture centers and build lots of art objects, and then tax your citizenry as high as possible.

Plotting For Victory

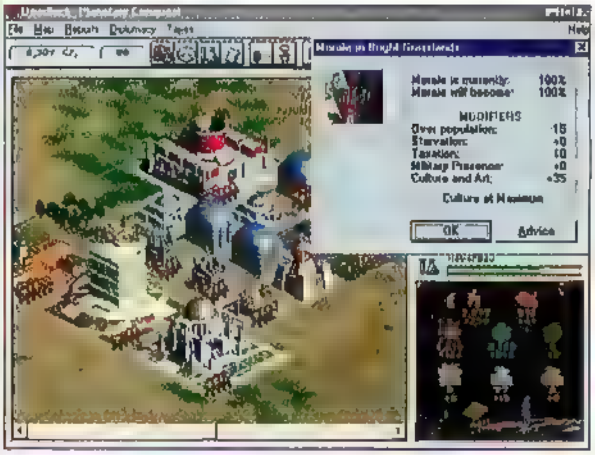
Obviously, your initial landing site should allow quick growth, access to all of the necessary resources, and–if the map has one or more islands–access to the sea. As important as terrain, though, is your to proximity to and relationship with opposing forces.

For instance, never choose a starting site in the middle of the map, regardless of how good the terrain is. This will leave you open to attack from all sides, and will require a much greater expenditure in garrison units and fortifications. Also, if you know your opponents, try to put at least one player between you and the opponent you fear the most. If you consider yourself fearless, put as much space as possible between yourself and the most aggressive player. Avoid at all costs that unique kind of gamer who values a good attack over all else. They usually lose, but they can take you down with them if you're not careful.

At the same time, consider the overall balance of power on the ground when choosing a site, particularly if you are one of the last to choose. Try not to allow one opponent to get an island or easily defensible territory all to himself, thus leaving the rest of you to fight it out while he consolidates and builds his empire.

a difficult conquest, and allows you to reinforce a threatened zone before it can be overrun. Rather than garrisoning all of your colony, try building a powerful rapid-reaction force, locating it centrally, and then responding as necessary. Send the rest of your units on to the attack.

Let's face it–Deadlock isn't Civilization. The key isn't natural growth, but military conquest–the faster the better. Keep in mind, however, that you will frequently have to work as part of an alliance, and that too much success too early may bring the wrath of all the other players down upon your head. Anyone who has played *Diplomacy* will know what I mean. In fact, a few games of *Diplomacy* might serve Deadlock players well, as knowing how to manage the growth of your empire without disturbing allies–and knowing when to stab them in the back–is important here.



Morale is currently: 100%
Morale will become: 100%

MODIFIERS
Over population: -15
Starvation: +0
Taxation: +0
Military Presence: +0
Culture and Art: +35

Culture at Maximum

IN THE ZONE Choosing your landing site is your first strategic move. Here, the Tarth are far enough away from the enemy, but close to forests and mountains and only one territory away from the sea.

THE WAR COLLEGE

The basic elements of military strategy are pretty obvious, and I won't waste too much time on them. Build the biggest, best-armed forces possible, then go on the rampage. Use combined arms–especially those powerful missiles–wherever possible, and try to capture enemy territory intact. You might want to try slash-and burn attacks if you know you can't defend a zone, but you want to put the brakes on an opponent's economy.

Having said this, how do aspiring planetary conquerors get ahead in the world? In games against multiple human opponents, rapid and unpredictable–or at least unexpected–action can be very effective. A war of attrition is not only boring, it's easy to plan against. If you gradually grow stronger than everyone else, you can expect to watch them gradually line up against you.

On the other hand, if you can launch a series of attacks that get you what you need before anyone else can react, or at least before they can react effectively, you will obviously be much better off. The simplest way to accomplish this is through technology. Getting to the Holocaust Cannon or Supernova Warheads first can give you a devastating advantage over your opponents.

Alternatively–and a lot more interestingly–with the right economic planning, you can buy yourself a superior military force. The key to using the Skirineen is having enough morale to survive the odd scandal, and having the cash to buy a serious force in a hurry.

Obviously, the higher your taxes, the better your buying power will be. Maximize your trade from idle air and port facilities. The best way to get a lot of cash in a hurry is through the sale of resources.

Buying an army serves two purposes: you get decent units quickly, and you should be able to catch your opponents unaware. The value of surprise cannot be overestimated against a human opponent, given the time limits for turns and the high level of micromanagement needed to make a big empire work properly.

NUKES FOR SALE Buying from the Skirineen can quickly lead to military superiority. If you keep your morale high enough and have enough money, you can buy an instant and large army and surprise your foes.

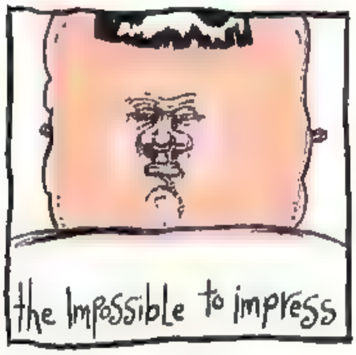
REASONABLE FORCE

Finally, don't overcommit to foolish battles, no matter how much your allies insist. Units are expensive and can die quickly in the face of superior forces or fortifications. Always give your units retreat orders at high damage levels, since it's better to live to fight another day.

On the defensive side, this isn't necessarily the case. It goes without saying that if an ally is getting ahead of you, you may want to encourage him to overstep his power by attacking a particularly tough zone. After all, you're all engaged in a battle for the planet, but only one of you can win. If you play your cards right, that will be you.

Sierra Adventure Games:

Ideal for



and

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Roberta Williams' *Phantasmagoria* terrified and captivated more than a million horror and mystery lovers as one of the unqualified successes of the past year. Now the terror is back, intensified and more controversial than ever in an all new story, *A Puzzle of Flesh*.™ A game that will appeal to The Steel-Nerved, this richly woven tapestry of psychological horror pulls no punches. The scenes are often all too graphic, the fear you'll feel will be all too real. Fortunately, the designers have thoughtfully provided a password-protected way to set the level of intensity, should this game be a little too much for some members of your family. Or, perhaps, even you.

RP

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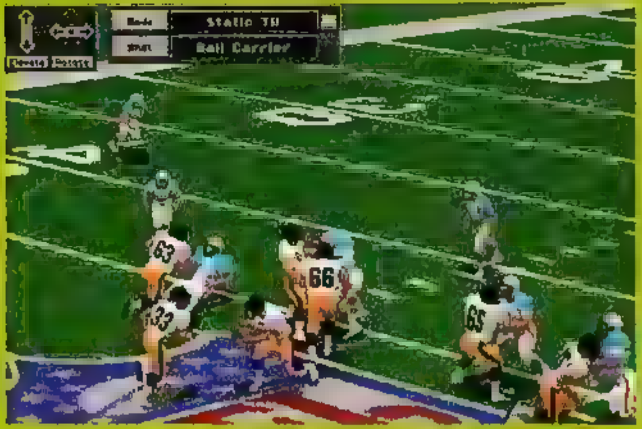

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WIN 95

PLAYERS W

FRONT PAGE SPORTS: TROPHY BASS 2

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Sierra Sports Games: Made with

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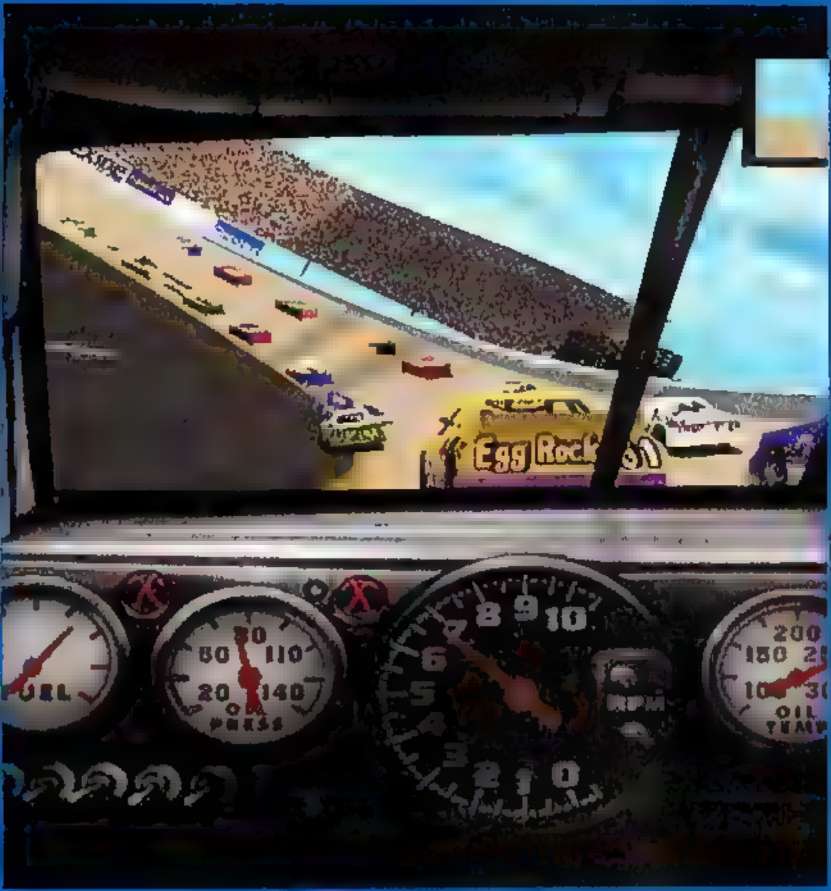

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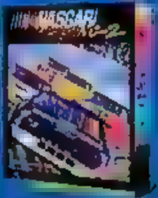

NASCAR Racing is also available for Mac and the PlayStation™ game console.

DOS

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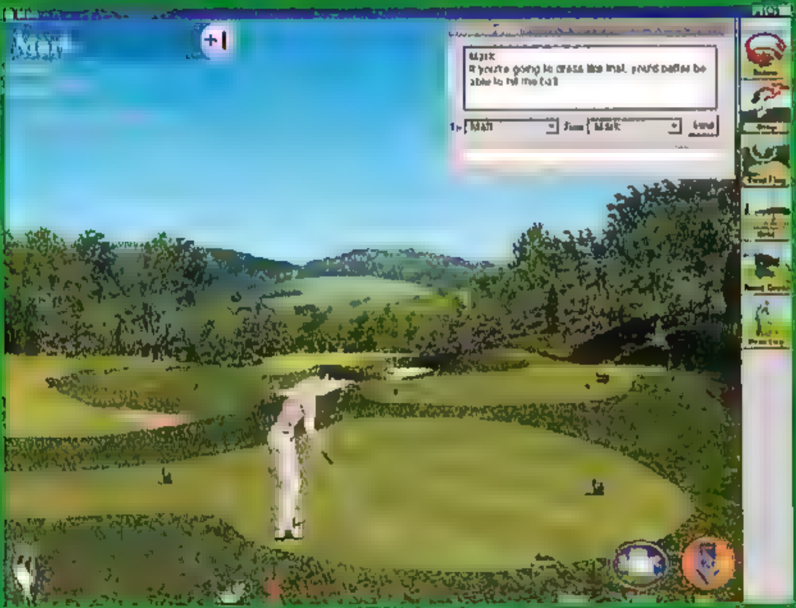
What does swinging a golf club have in common with clicking a mouse? If you ask us: nada. That's why we invented TrueSwing™. You pull the mouse back for your backswing, then thrust it forward for your shot. Now we're talking golf. We're also talking down-to-the-inch realism on the world-class courses you'll play, and the 3D animated golfers you'll watch. And, thanks to network play, you can hit the links with up to 255 of your closest friends. Anything else? Yes. This game was designed by Vance Cook, the genius behind the original Links 386. So, basically, it's the golf game to get if you're The Settle-For-Nothing-But-The-Best kind of gamer.

WIN 95



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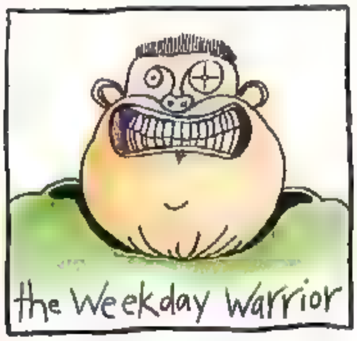
WIN 95

TEEN

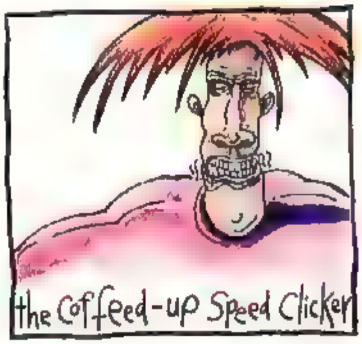
Sierra Action & Battle Games: They're What to Get



the Weekday Warrior

the Testosterone Endowed

and



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```
Michael Angelle HP:17(20) AC:12
Take 3 points damage!
Terence Gryphon HP:6
Your swing misses
Marlee Reesona HP:18(20) AC:10
Delivered 5 points damage
```

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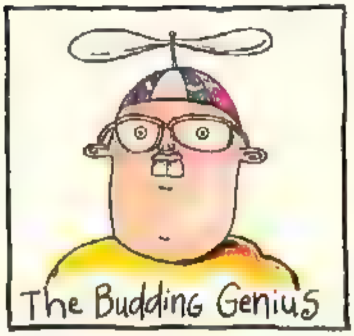

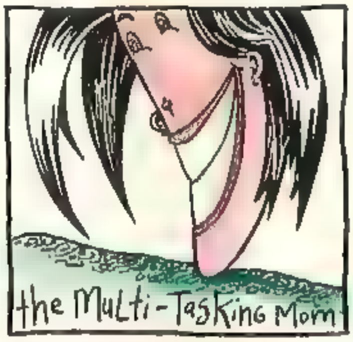

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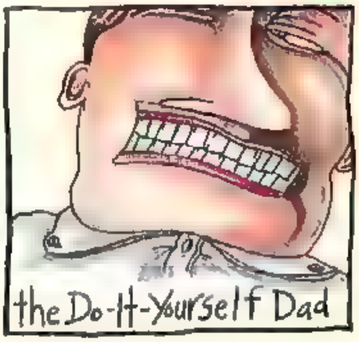

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Are you one of those Research-Things-To-Death-Before-You-Buy people? Well, last year, a magazine that reports on consumer matters and who would sue us in an instant if we used their name, said that *Dr. Brain* is the best software you can buy for your kids. And what would they say to our latest installment? We bet they'd like the way *Dr. Brain* lets you travel through time. But mostly, they'd be impressed by the ten new 3D puzzle areas, over 600 new puzzles, and the three levels of difficulty that make *Dr. Brain* fun and challenging for all ages–including yours.

WIN 95 WIN MAC

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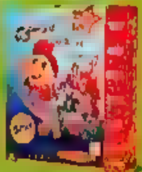

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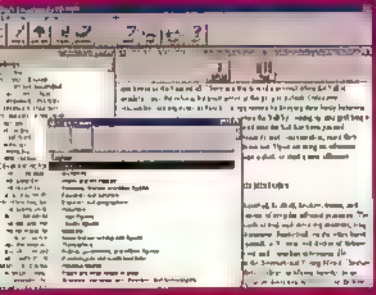

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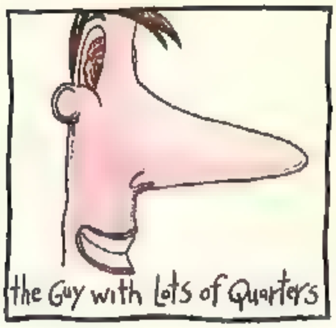

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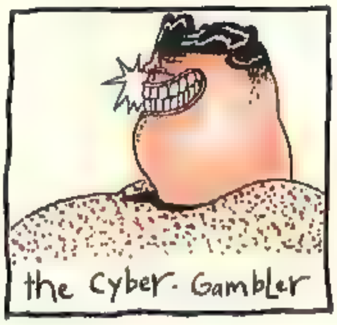

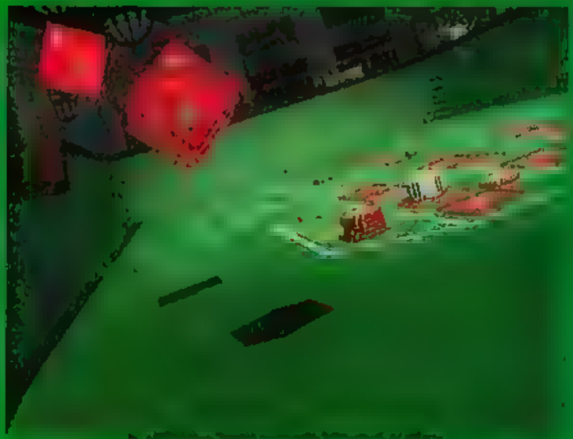

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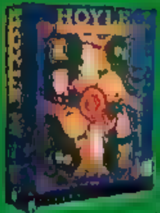

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WIN 95 | WIN

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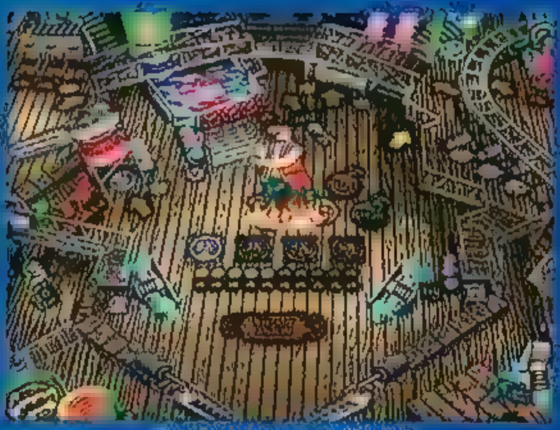
If you're one of The Over-Stim Deprived, do we have a game fo you. Following on the incredibly hot heels of last year's best-selling *3D Ultra Pinball* comes this all-new edition, with three separat tables brimming with moving zombies, skele tons, gargoyles and ball-stealing ghosts. (Be you've never seen that in a quarter-gobbling table.) And here's something you don't see i other PC pinball games: Sierra's physics-based ball movement, extra wide tables, and supe fast play action. Exciting? Exciting! We're getting wired just telling you about it.

WIN 95



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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #202

Performance PC Tuning

A Faster System May Be A Few Tweaks Away

This month I had the chance to build a gamer's dream machine, which is a nice solution if you can afford it. In the real world, though, most of us don't have $9,000 to create our vision of the perfect hot rod, so we have to make some compromises. With a little help from a few friends, I've assembled some suggestions for tuning up your own machine to get the best performance. Some of these involve spending some hard-earned cash, but others simply require a little patient tweaking of your system.

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

An area of performance often overlooked is memory. Modern operating systems like Windows 95, Windows NT, or OS/2 like lots of RAM—the more the better, within reason. A P166 with 32 MB of RAM might actually run better than a P200 with only 16 MB. If you're running DOS games under Windows 95 from the desktop, not as an MS-DOS exclusive application, you should think about upgrading to 32 MB of memory. Most of the more recent DOS games require at least 8 MB of memory, and a lot of them want 16. Given that Win 95 needs about 12 MB, then you're looking at 28 MB—12 for Win 95 and 16 for the game. The alternative is to reboot to exclusive MS-DOS mode.

Whatever you do, *don't* get one of those memory compression programs. Even the ones that work can adversely affect the performance of DOS games.

Let's talk about types of memory for a moment. In the past, all you had to worry about was speed: Should I get 80, 70, or 60 nanosecond (ns) memory? (A nanosecond is one-billionth of a second.) Then came Extended Data Out (EDO) DRAM, which requires newer motherboard core logic to work. Lately, there's been a lot of hoopla, mostly in ads, about Synchronous DRAM (SDRAM).

Your system may support SDRAM, even if you're not running it currently. Systems using Intel's 430VX motherboard chip set can use SDRAM. Its access time is pretty typical, 60 ns, but SDRAM offers a higher clock rate (100 MHz), while other memory technologies usually run at 66 MHz. In theory, SDRAM should yield faster performance since it runs at clock rates closer to that of the CPU. In practice, it's not so obvious. Using the Winbench 96 benchmark, I found the differences between EDO DRAM and SDRAM ranged from three percent faster in CPUMark performance to four percent slower in Graphics Winmark performance. These data are actually within the margin of error for Winbench, so if your board supports SDRAM, don't pay a premium for it, because you won't get much payback.

What about graphics memory? Memory used in graphics adapters offers an even more stunning array of confusing acronyms than system RAM: SGRAM, RDRAM, VRAM, MDRAM, WRAM. Despite all the marketing hype, you can usually find excellent, fast graphics cards using any of these technologies (see the CGW Web site for more). As I've noted in past columns, the quality of the drivers is often much more important than hardware details, especially when you consider that graphics cards often use the same accelerator chip.

OVERCLOCKING: DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME

A number of users have discovered that it's possible to set jumpers on many motherboards to run their processors faster than their rated speed. In other words, by changing a couple of jumpers, a Pentium 133 can be run at, say, 150 MHz. This trick is called "overclocking," and my suggestion is: avoid it. When CPU chips come off the fabrication line, they're all together on a single wafer of silicon. Vendors test the processors at different speeds, then sort them into appropriate bins. All companies allow for a slight margin of error. You may be lucky and get a chip that can be clocked higher without any problems — then again, you might not. The problems might be obvious (the system doesn't boot) or insidious (mysterious lockups or program crashes). Also, overclocking generates more heat, which can have an adverse effect, possibly shortening the life span of the chip. As the disclaimer goes, unless you're a trained professional, don't try this at home.

BIG WHEELS KEEP ON TURNIN'

Here are some things you can do to help speed up your disk. One obvious tip that's often overlooked is to simply defragment your hard disk periodically. Files

> “Tuning your system can improve performance, and may yield more frames per second.”

CG-ROM

For detailed info on CGW's 3D graphic accelerator tests, hit the Web at www.zd.com/gaming live on a disk as discrete pieces, called clusters, which may not be contiguous (meaning that they all may not be adjacent to each other). Also, as files are created and deleted, gaps between clusters will be created. Over time, your disk will seem to be running slower and slower. Running Win 95's Disk Defragmenter utility brings all the files together, rearranging them so that all files are stored contiguously.

Here's a useful trick if you have two separate hard disks, and are running Win 95. If Windows 95 is on drive C, tell it to put the swap space on drive D (as an example). You can change this setting by bringing up Control Panel, selecting the System icon, clicking the Performance tab, and then pressing the Virtual Memory button. Click on "Let me specify my own virtual memory settings." You can then pick the drive from the pull-down list. Note: make sure that the drive you select has at least 30+ MB of free space.

CD-ROM PERFORMANCE

One of the most underrated performance metrics for CD drives is CPU utilization. What good is an 8x drive if, while transferring data, it eats up so much of your processor's time that the game stalls? EIDE CD-ROM drives often have high CPU utilization, whereas SCSI CD-ROMs don't. Here's where a little extra investment can pay off in terms of performance. On top of that, SCSI CD-ROMs are finally starting to drop in price, with 6x and 8x SCSI drives dropping below $200. Yes, you'll need a SCSI host adapter, but if it's only for the CD-ROM, you can find decent ones for well under $100.

If you're running from Win 95, make sure your CD-ROM cache is at its highest setting. Right-click on the My Computer icon, and select Properties, then select the Performance tab. Click on the File System button, and set Supplemental Cache size as high as it goes—assuming you have at least 16 MB of RAM—and set the CD-ROM drive type to "quad speed or higher."

BIOS TWEAKING

One little-understood area that offers some potential for better performance is the ROM BIOS. You may have gotten into your BIOS setup program, usually by pressing a specified key during boot-up, to set up a new hard disk. Not all BIOSes offer a lot of adjustment, but some versions of the AMI and Award BIOSes are tweakers' heaven. Be warned, though: messing with the BIOS is dangerous—it's possible that the system can get into a state where it won't boot. One word of advice: never, *ever* mess with PCI interrupts unless you know what you're doing.

The area in the BIOS offering the biggest potential for performance increases is the area of memory timing. For example, the Pentium Pro system we built for this year's ultimate gaming rig allows you to set the memory speed to 50 ns. There isn't much in the way of true 50 ns DRAM out there, but the parity EDO DRAM we used seems to support it.

Tweaking memory timings isn't dangerous, but it can cause lockups, system halts, and even the dreaded "blue screen o' death" in Windows 95. If you're tweaking memory timings and get erratic behavior in your system, restore the default.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Spending a little time tuning your system can smooth overall performance, and may yield more frames per second. You may suddenly discover that processor or motherboard upgrade wasn't as urgent as you thought. At worst, you'll develop a little more familiarity with the inner workings of that virtual world engine on your desktop. Who knows, maybe your ultimate rig will be faster than ours.

For more detailed information on upgrades, watch for Loyd Case's Ultimate Game Machine, Part IV in March. ⚙

CG TIPS!

▸**Dedicated Game Ports and the Microsoft Sidewinder Gamepad** Microsoft's new Sidewinder gamepad looks really cool, but it has a potentially dangerous flaw. The Sidewinder works only from within Windows 95, and installs special drivers for its operation. Unfortunately, the Sidewinder becomes very cranky when more than one game port is present. This can happen when, for example, you have a Plug-and-Play (PnP) sound card installed and a dedicated game card, such as the CH Gamecard or the Thrustmaster ACM card. You need to make sure that the game port on the sound card is disabled in Windows 95. Go to the Device Manager in Control Panel and deselect "original configuration" for the game port on the sound card. Cards like Creative Labs' PnP cards also come with a configuration utility—make sure you disable the game port there, too. If you don't, Windows 95 may refuse to start, and then might even need to be reinstalled.

▸**Matrox Cards and the 3D Checkbox** If you've fooled around with the neat little utilities that Matrox ships with its cards for configuring resolution, color depth, and so on, you may have noticed a little checkbox labeled 3D. Don't check it—it's there for certain kinds of 3D acceleration used for CAD programs and other similar applications, not for 3D games. If you do check it, your Windows performance will degrade substantially, and there will be no benefit for 3D games. If you're playing 3D games in Windows 95 written with Microsoft's Direct3D, they'll take care of turning on 3D acceleration automatically.

▸**Verité Version of Quake 1.06 Available** If you've gotten one of the new cards with the Rendition Verité 3D accelerator, then you've probably been playing VQuake, the Rendition-accelerated version of Quake. There's now a version of VQuake available that works with Quake 1.06. It's better tuned and runs more efficiently than the original VQuake, so you won't notice any difference on benchmarks, but it runs more fluidly overall, and the mysterious hesitations that would occasionally occur with the 1.01 version are mostly gone. You can get the updated version from Rendition at: www.rendition.com/quake.html

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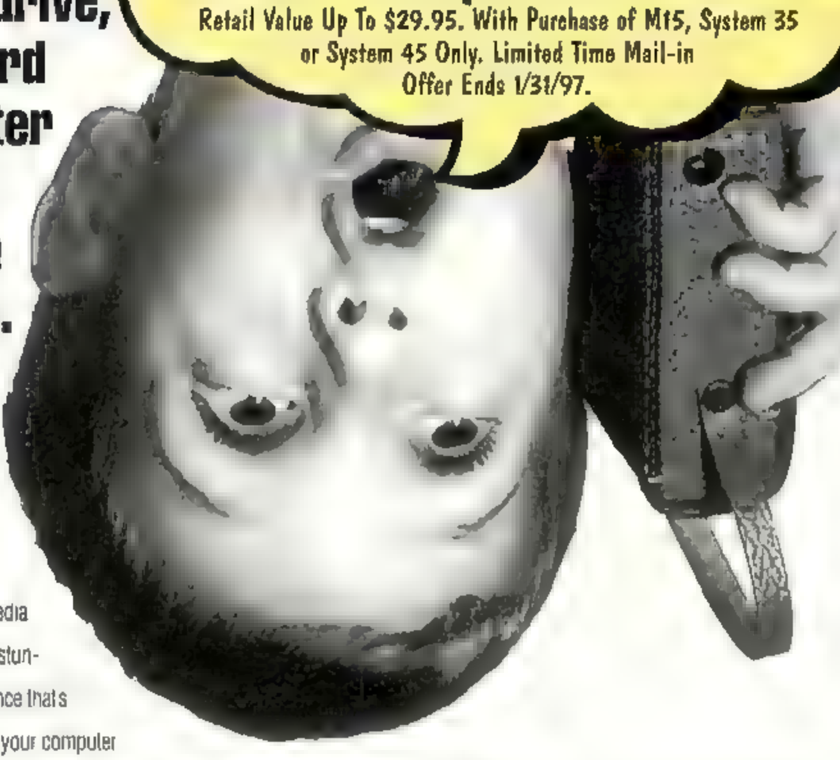

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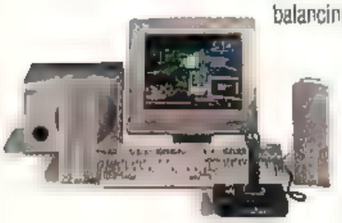

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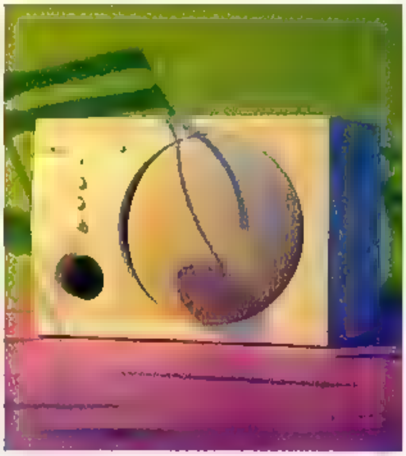

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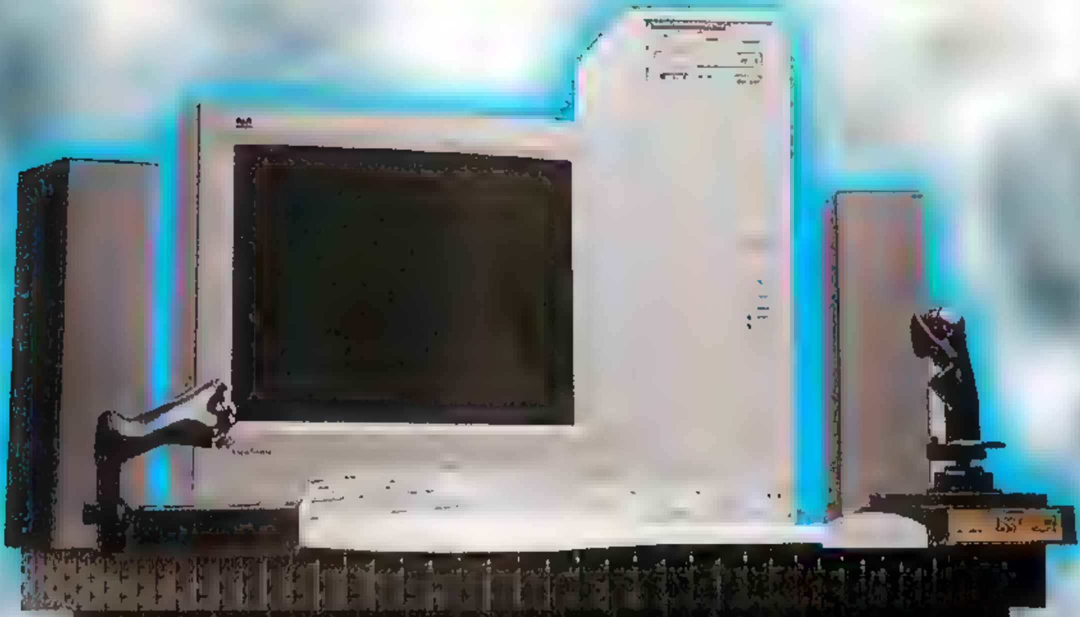


The Ultimate Gaming PC

Or, What Will Nine Grand Get You In The Real World?

BY LOYD CASE

For me, the defining moment in the film *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* is the scene where the last Knights Templar guarding the Holy Grail gazes down at the ashes of one of the villains who had drunk from the wrong cup, and intones, "He chose... poorly."

Every time we buy a new piece of hardware, or even a whole system, we're faced with choices, and many times these choices are compromises. What if we didn't have to compromise? What if we could build a system from scratch that uses nothing but best-of-breed components? We asked these questions in last year's edition of the Ultimate Game Machine, and the answer was a Pentium 133 with lots of bells and whistles.

Now it's a year later, and the Pentium 133 is the entry level. The good news is that computer components don't follow the national inflation rate, so this year's system is actually less expensive than last [illegible]

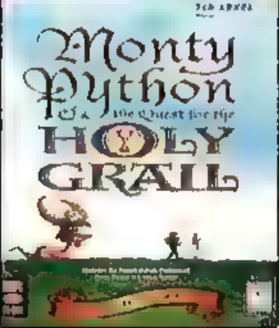
Virtual Pool from MacPlay has all the angles and shots of the real game—and then some. Features 4 great pool games, full-motion video library, realistic physics and geometry, easy multiplayer modes, realistic 3-D perspective and graphics plus a musical jukebox.

Five hundred years ago, Europe's conquering heroes pursued dreams of a new world. MacPlay's Conquest of the New World is a strategy game where you command explorers, settlers and mercenary soldiers as they discover a new world and build the ultimate nation.

You Don't Know Jack, Volume 2, is the hilarious sequel to the original award-winning game. This Jack comes complete with 800 all-new questions, new question types, celebrity guest appearances, new features and more. From Berkeley Systems.

In Zork Nemesis, you're beckoned to the Forbidden Lands, a cursed world occupied only by the tortured spirits trapped there. Travel through 5 mind-bending worlds to discover the ancient secret of alchemy that will free the trapped souls from evil's grip. From Activision.

MacSoft's Terminal Velocity offers fast 3-D texture-mapped graphics, full 360-degree flight movement and 7 weapons of extraordinary destruction as you fight your way through 9 unique planets with an awesome array of air-to-air and air-to-ground combat action.



The best CD-ROM game of 932 A.D.—Monty Python and the Quest for the Holy Grail from 7th Level, Inc. It will take you on a romp through King Arthur's England, uncovering clues, solving puzzles and playing wholesome games like "Burn the Witch" and "Spank the Virgin."

Westwood Studios' Command and Conquer takes you into a gritty, high-tech world where the art of electronic intelligence and covert surveillance reigns supreme. Where guerrilla strategies and savage combat are the norm. Master forces and incinerate your enemies to the bone.

Tank Commander by Eidos Interactive slams you into the cockpit of an M1 Abrams tank as you test your split-second-decision skills against enemy tanks in over 25 fully textured missions. Destroy T-72, Leopard and Challenger tanks with over 7 weapons.

With its incredibly realistic flight models, 3-D photo-realistic landscapes and the use of real-world physics, Flight Unlimited re-creates the most accurate sensation of aerobatic flying ever experienced on the Macintosh. For best results, play before lunch.

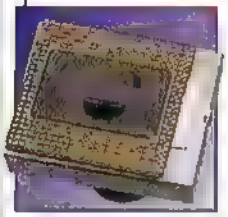
Origin Systems' Wing Commander IV is one of the latest space-combat games for the Mac. Take on the role of Colonel Blair, played by Mark Hamill in breathtaking space battles and heart-pounding drama, as you fight your way through the most spectacular Wing Commander yet.

Is that th

Get ready for the biggest adrenaline rush of the holiday season. We're talking new games for the Mac.® We're also talking sweaty palms. Heart-pounding exhilaration. Stomach-in-the-throat thrills—the works. And here's the best part: with thousands of titles to choose from, you may never come down from that gaming high. Piqued your interest? Good

Even if you had an unlimited purse, there are still lots of choices to make. You can't even go by magazine reviews, because different magazines often contradict each other. In my case, I applied 15 years of performance tuning, hardware experience and good old gut-level instinct to come up with this year's ultimate rig. You may quibble with some of the choices I made, and there may be products available now which I couldn't test when I wrote this, but overall I know you'll be pleased with this system's performance and peripherals. But enough talk, let's see the system.

The Brains of the Operation



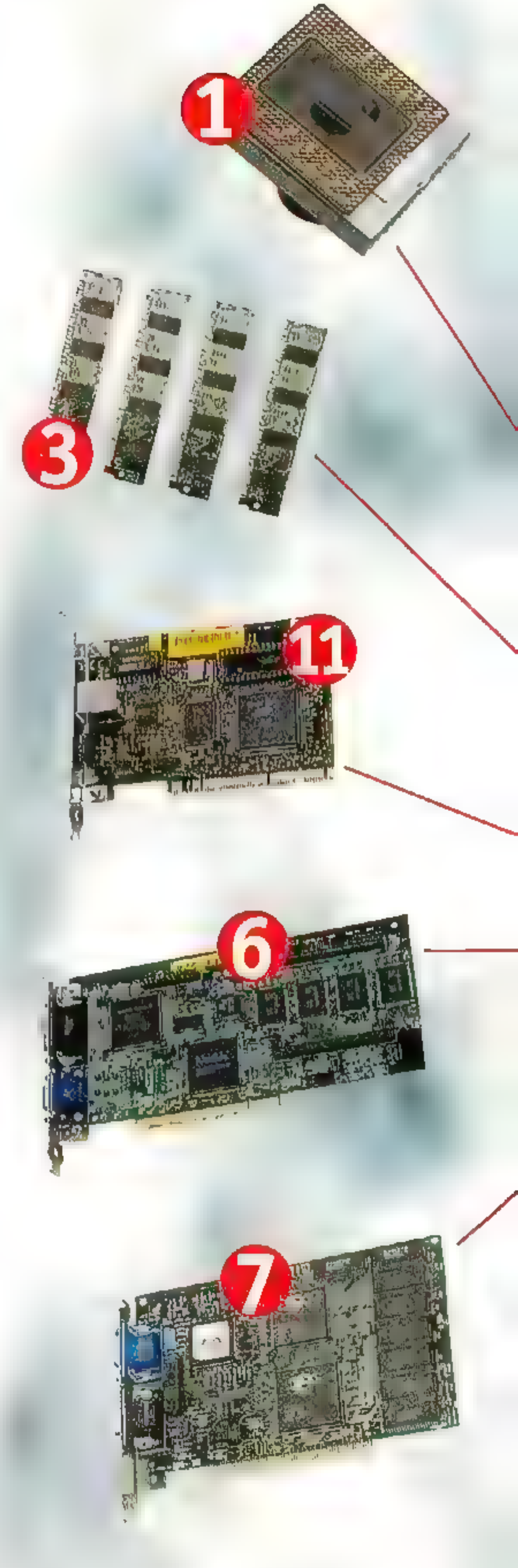
There's no competition here, yet. Intel's 200 MHz Pentium Pro ❶ is the current king of the heap for X86 compatible processors.

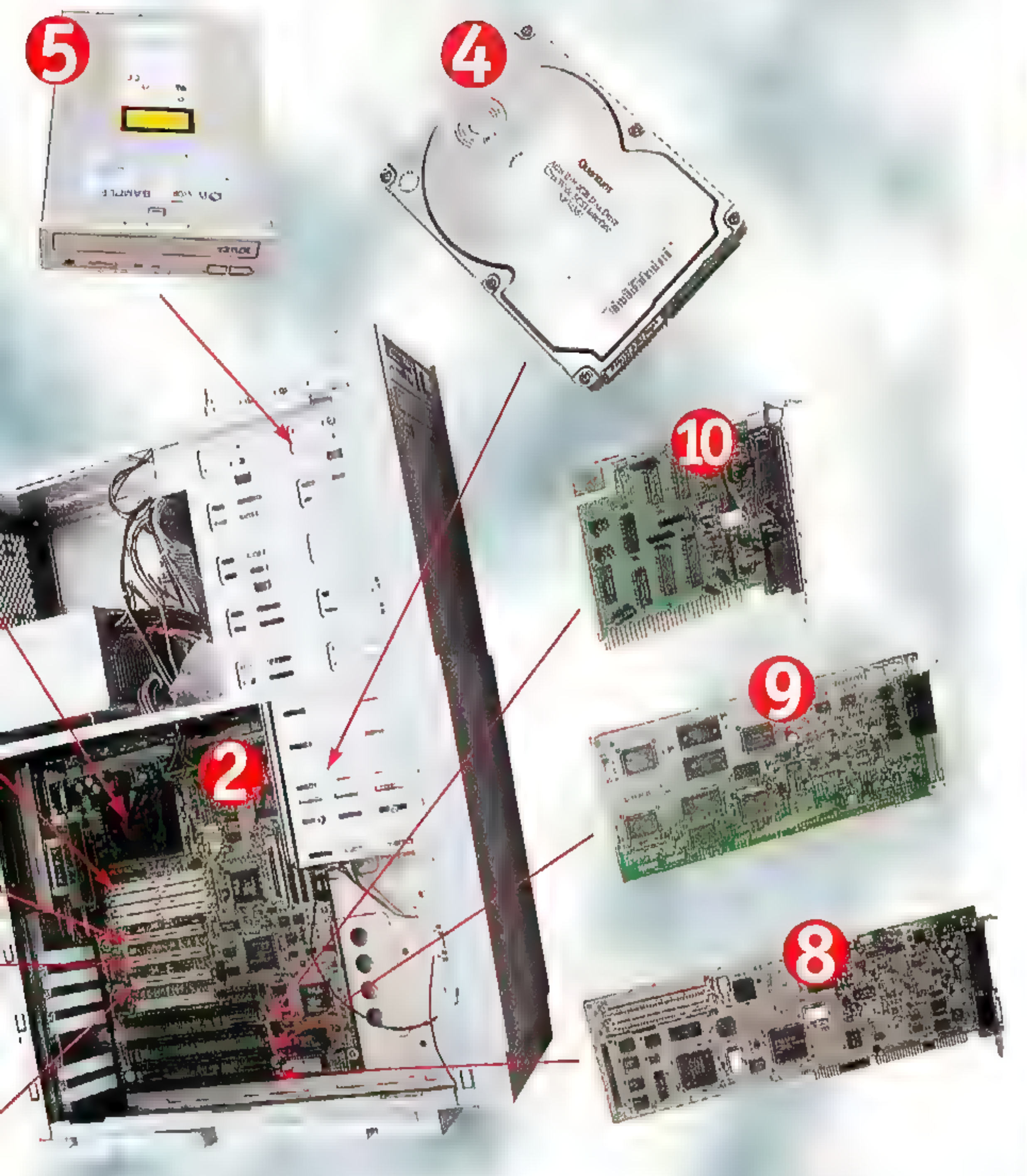
In most cases, the Pentium Pro is at least as fast, if not faster, in 16 bit performance than a Pentium 200 (see last month's Tech column). In 32 bit apps, it's not even a contest—and most games these days are 32-bit applications. A few games, such as Duke Nukem 3D, make heavy use of 8 and 16 bit operations, which is not the Pro's strong suit, but even then, Duke's performance on a Pentium Pro should satisfy even hard-core Dukeheads. And for those of you in the Quake camp, the Pro's superior floating-point performance makes game play at 640 x 400 smooth instead of jerky.

The Pro got a bad rap early on for a couple of reasons. For one, Intel released the 150 MHz Pentium Pro, which didn't clock as fast as the high end of the Pentium family at the time, the Pentium 166. In addition, the sole core logic chip set—which lets the CPU talk to the PC motherboard—was supplied by Intel, and had a couple of major performance-draining bugs.

That's all over now. The 200 MHz chip is as fast as the Pentium Pro line comes, and the best chip-set currently is the Natoma 440FX chip-set, also from Intel, that fixes many of the problems of the older Orion glue logic. Natoma supports EDO DRAM, PCI concurrency and a host of other neat features that help speed data through the system. It's even capable of supporting two Pentium Pros, but we decided that would be overkill—there aren't any commercial games that support multiple processors.

One very handy tool is a piece of software, FastVid, that turns on key Pentium features to accelerate graphics data, particularly DOS VGA and SVGA data. Without FastVid, you have a very fast computer that has okay graphics. With FastVid, you have a very fast computer that also is a game graphics hot rod—if the graphics card can handle it.





1 Intel 200 MHz Pentium Pro processor
2 AIR P6NPI motherboard with Natoma chip-set
3 64 MB of EDO DRAM
4 Quantum Atlas II ultra-wide SCSI 4.4 GB hard drive
5 Plextor 12x SCSI CD-ROM drive
6 Matrox Millenium graphics accelerator
7 Orchid Righteous 3D accelerator (3Dfx Voodoo)
8 Creative Labs AWE-32 PnP sound card
9 Yamaha SW60XG Waveforce wavetable card
10 CH GameCard 3 joystick card
11 3COM Etherlink XL network card

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EACH [illegible]DROME ARENA HAS ITS OWN LETHAL COMBINATION OF WEAPONS, RAMPS, POWER-UPS AND AMPUTA[illegible] OBSTACLES.

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SCORE WITH THE "ROK" OR YOUR OPPONENT'S SEVERED HEAD. YOUR EQUIPMENT IS SPECIALLY DESIGNED FOR SCORING AND BUTCHERING.

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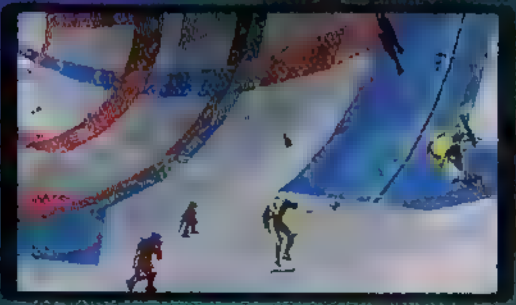

HYPERBLADE IS COMPATIBLE WITH MANY 3-D ACCELERATOR CARDS

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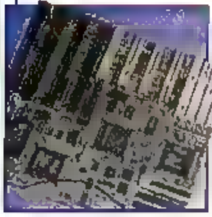
Motherboard, Disk Controller and Accouterments



One of the key issues with the creation of any new system is balancing the components. A really fast processor can be seriously hobbled by inadequate memory or a very slow disk. We went for the fastest disk we could find, which meant SCSI—not just plain, vanilla fast SCSI, but ultra-wide SCSI, capable of moving data along the SCSI bus at 40 MB/sec. While ultra-SCSI is a bit of overkill for a system with only a single hard disk, this is, after all, the ultimate game PC.

For the motherboard, ② we picked the Advanced Integration Research (AIR) P6NPI. In addition to the Natoma chip-set, this board has 4 PCI slots and 4 ISA slots (one pair shared) and an onboard Adaptec ultrawide SCSI controller. This board adopts the new ATX form factor, which makes for much less cable clutter in the system—parallel, serial and mouse ports are attached to the back of the board—and better cooling since processor is placed closer to the cooling fan. It does require an ATX style case and power supply. We chose an In Win IQ-500 full tower case (fewer bleeding knuckles that way) and a PC Power and Cooling Standard ATX power supply. The In Win case has some nice features—especially the slide-out motherboard tray, which makes installation much easier. PC Power and Cooling is the undisputed leader in high-quality PC power supplies.

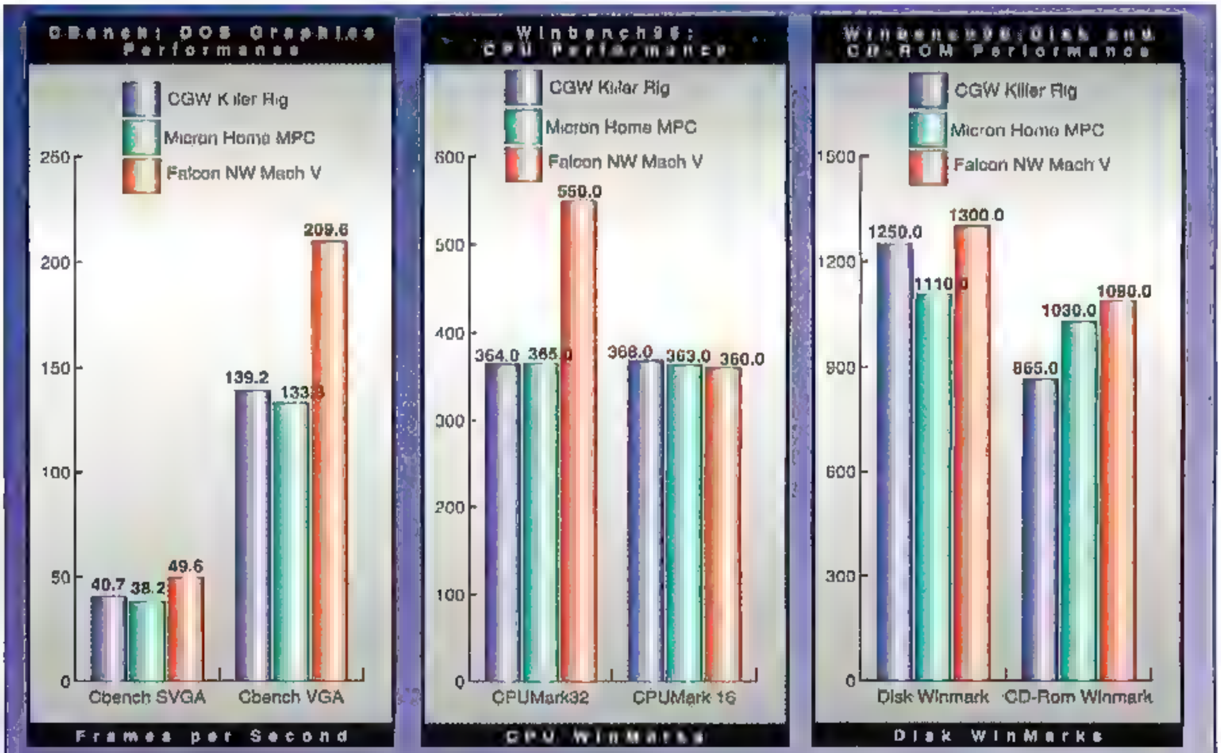
Of course, with a Pentium Pro, you'd want to have enough DRAM so we went with 64 MB of true parity EDO DRAM. ③ The Pentium Pro processor itself has 256 KB of onboard cache that runs as fast as the processor.

Mass Storage

We wanted the fastest possible hard disk for this system. After much digging, we found that Quantum was preparing to ship its Atlas II ultra-wide SCSI 4.4 GB drive. ④ This disk rotates at 7200 RPM and has an access time of 8 milliseconds—among the fastest around. The Quantum also has a very high bit density, cramming the 4.4 GB onto five platters, possible because of a technology called magneto-resistive heads, or MR for short. Because of the high density of bits on the platters, data can stream off the disk very fast, indeed.

The Atlas II is well matched with the AIR motherboard's onboard SCSI hardware. We wanted a CD-ROM drive that's equally well-matched, so we chose Plextor's new 12x SCSI CD ROM drive. ⑤ It boasts an access time of 105 milliseconds and a staggering 1.8 MB/sec max transfer rate, while offering caddyless tray loading.

Finally, you need good backup for any system with this much hard disk space. On the other hand, most gamers don't have gigabytes of mission-critical data, so something like a high-capacity tape drive isn't really necessary. We gamers are, however, an impatient lot, so being able to save and restore backups quickly is important. At first, we considered Iomega's Zip drive, but the low capacity and slowness put us off. We settled on the new Syquest EZ-Flyer 230, the SCSI version, of course. The EZ-Flyer sports hard disk like performance, along with 230 MB for each 3.5-in. cartridge. The cartridges themselves retail for a mere $29.95, cheaper than some high capacity tapes.



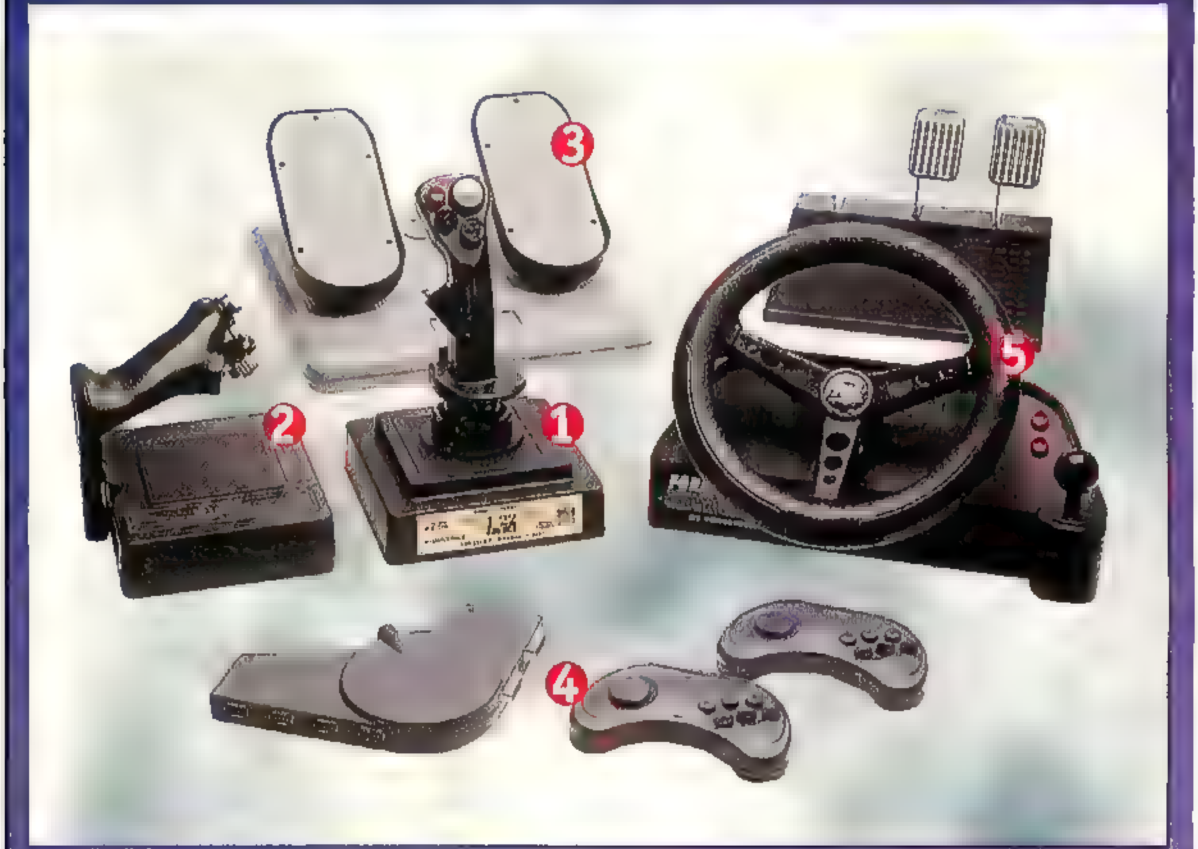
*The Micron Home MPC and Falcon Northwest Mach V scored the highest ratings in last month's Ultimate Game Machine roundup, earning 5-stars and 4.5 stars respectively.

Graphics: Something Old And Something New

Last year we used the Matrox Millenium as the graphics card for the ultimate gaming machine. This year, we're sticking with the Millenium, ⑥ which is still at or near the top of the heap in Windows performance and posts very good DOS game benchmarks as well. There are cards *faster in* one area or another, but there isn't a better-balanced graphics card on the market, especially matched with our choice of monitor.

The Viewsonic PT-810 uses something Viewsonic calls Sonictron, which is their version of Trinitron technology. The PT810 has a very sharp image and is also capable of 77 Hz refresh rate at 1600 x 1200 resolution—a perfect match for the Matrox card's capabilities. It's hard to beat CIVILIZATION 2 played at 1600 x 1200 on a 21 in. monitor.

Calling All Control Freaks



The subject of controllers always results in a heated discussion among gamers. The choice of joysticks or gamepads seems to be one of the most personal ones any game player can make. This year, we went unabashedly for the high end. For flight controls, we chose the ThrustMaster F-22 Pro control stick ① paired with their TQS throttle quadrant ②. We stuck with the CH Pro Pedals ③, preferring the closer spacing and overall feel of the CH pedals to the ThrustMaster RCS. However, there's always a need for [illegible] quick games, [illegible] Combat Stick, is still a solid alternative to the F-22's need for extensive program downloads.

Finally, gamepads. Though great for certain kinds of action games, the action [illegible] of various gamepads seems to be all over the map. After some deliberation, we decided on the Gravis GRIP ④ system, whose gamepad controllers offer very good [illegible] functionality. The GRIP's MultiPort [illegible] four of these controllers and has [illegible] two joysticks [illegible] Gravis has [illegible] shipped its GamePad [illegible] PlayStation [illegible] can also be used with the GRIP system.

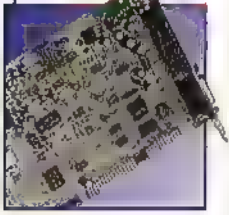
Of course, if you're into racing games, you need to have a real steering wheel—joysticks just don't cut it. We went back to ThrustMaster again for their Formula T2 driving wheel ⑤ and foot pedal combo.

Topping all of this off is a good mouse and keyboard. The Microsoft Natural Keyboard [illegible]

ARE YOU THE CRACK PILOT
THE POPULATION IS
DYING FOR?
WINDOWS 95
SURFACE
RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
COMPRO GAMES
PHILIPS

But what about 3D? The Millenium's 3D capabilities are pretty bare-bones, at least compared with the current crop of 3D accelerators. That's why we mated it to the Orchid Righteous 3D, ❼ which uses the 3Dfx Voodoo chip set, and works well with the Millenium. The Voodoo has garnered wide industry support for its high-performance 3D technology, and is ideal for our ultimate rig.

The Sound and the Fury



No gaming rig would be complete without sound cards and a hot speaker setup. Like last year, we went with Creative Lab's AWE-32 Plug and Play. ❽ The AWE's MIDI sounds are a little weak, so we added a Yamaha SW60XG Waveforce stand-alone wavetable card. ❾ The Yamaha card uses an 18 bit DAC (digital to analog converter) to render the 4 MB of wavetable ROM, and sounds superb. You can route the AWE-32's line-level output to the line-in on the SW60XG, and control it using Yamaha's mixer applet, thereby preserving the 18-bit output from the SW60XG's DAC

Of course, you wouldn't want to pipe these cards through a pair of $40 speakers. Last year we suggested a complete audio system with speakers and separate receiver. Since then there have been some pretty hot speaker setups for computers, with better quality drivers and cleaner amplifiers. This year we went for the CrystaLake Multimedia 700 speakers. These speakers will rock your world, though they command a lofty $700 price tag

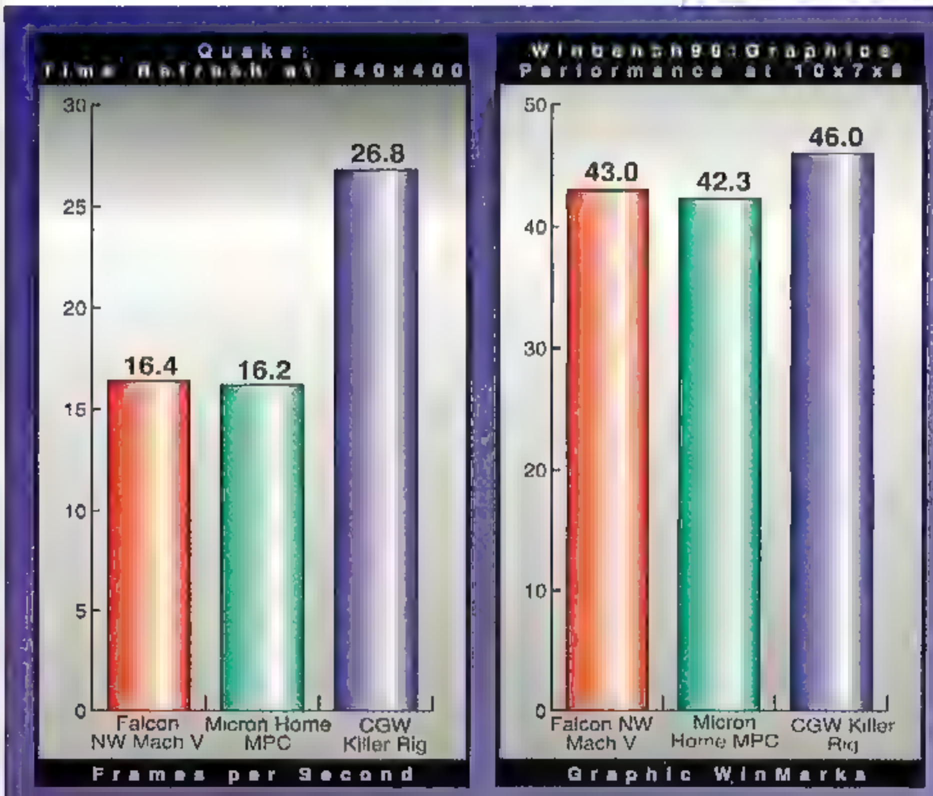
Since most sound card joystick ports tend to be twitchy, we added CH's GameCard 3 speed compensated joystick port card. ❿ This card has higher-quality components for reading in values from your joystick, and keeps thermal drift (calibration degradation) to a minimum. It comes with CH's TestAll utility, which is useful for verifying calibration settings, and you can reset the card with new speed settings in DOS by reinitializing their driver.

The Most Dangerous Prey

Last year, multiplayer games emerged as the hot feature every game needed to be considered complete. Of course, any computer claiming to be an ultimate game rig couldn't be complete without appropriate ways to connect to other systems for mutual mayhem

Despite the increasing importance of Internet gaming, nothing beats the visceral experience of getting together with a bunch of friends, networking all the computers together, and having at it. There are a growing number of network gaming groups forming around the country. The minimum requirement is to have a good networking card. One of the best around is the 3COM Etherlink XL 10/100, ⓫ which can actually connect at 100 Mbit/sec, but will also mate up with networks supporting a more mundane 10 Mbit/sec. No local gaming group will likely spring for the $600-$1500 for a 100 Mbit hub, but 10 Mbit hubs are now below $100 and twisted pair network cabling is much easier to configure than coax. (For a complete guide on assembling a game network, see the Sept. '96 issue of *CGW*)

For those times when you yearn to mix it up with real humans, but can't get your friends together, you need a good modem. Diamond Multimedia's Suprasonic 336V+ is an excellent Plug-and-Play external modem, supporting connect speeds up to 33.6 kbps. All you need then is a Kali license, or hook up with one of the



***The Micron Home MPC and Falcon Northwest Mach V scored the highest ratings in last month's Ultimate Game Machine roundup, earning 5-stars and 4.5 stars respectively.**

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64 MB Parity EDO DRAM	$516	www.airwebs.com	(408) 428-0800
Quantum Atlas II 4 GB Ultra Wide HD	$1,100	www.quantum.com	(408) 894-4000
3.5-in. floppy drive	$29	(commonly available)	
Plextor 12x CD drive (w/tray)	$305	www.plextor.com	(408) 980-1838
Syquest EZ-Flyer 230 MB removable	$235	www.syquest.com	(510) 226-4000
Two EZ Flyer cartridges	$60	www.syquest.com	(510) 226-4000
Matrox Millenium 4 MB Graphics card	$280	www.matrox.com	(800) 361-1408
Orchid Righteous 3D	$299	www.orchid.com	(888) [illegible]
Viewsonic PT-810 21-in. monitor	$1,800	www.viewsonic.com	(909) 869-7318
In Win IW-Q500 tower case	[illegible]	www.in-win.com	(818) [illegible]
PC Power & Cooling 250w ATX P/S	$89	(Not available)	(800) 722-6555
Suprasonic 33.6 external modem	[illegible]	www.diamondmm.com	[illegible]
Etherlink XL 10/100 LAN card	$139	www.3com.com	(408) 764-5000
AWE-32 PnP Sound Card	[illegible]	[illegible]	(408) 428-6600
Yamaha SW60XG MIDI synth card	$180	www.yamaha.com	(800) 823-6414
Thrustmaster ACM game card	[illegible]	www.thrustmaster.com	(503) [illegible]
Thrustmaster F22 Pro joystick	$130	www.thrustmaster.com	(503) 615-3200
Thrustmaster [illegible]	[illegible]	www.thrustmaster.com	(503) [illegible]
CH Pro Pedals	$89	www.chproducts.com	(619) 598-2518
Gravis GRIP System	[illegible]	www.gravis.com	[illegible]
CrystaLake Speakers	$700	www.crystalake.com	(503) 222-2603
Microsoft Natural Keyboard	[illegible]	www.microsoft.com	(206) 882-8080
Logitech Cordless Mouseman 96	$75	www.logitech.com	(510) 795-8500
Thrustmaster Formula T2 Wheel	[illegible]	www.thrustmaster.com	(503) [illegible]
Microsoft Windows 95	$189	www.microsoft.com	(206) 882-8080
Total	$8,826		

multiplayer gaming services, and you're now connected to a huge universe of would-be targets.

Some Assembly Required

Once you have this huge pile of boxes in your house, the next step is to put it together. While we can't give you a tutorial on computer assembly, here are a few hints.

Make sure you have a good surface that minimizes static electricity. If possible, a bare concrete floor and a grounded table is the best surface, but barring that, you need to make sure you ground yourself frequently by touching the computer's chassis often. You can get an inexpensive wrist grounding strap for a few bucks at Radio Shack.

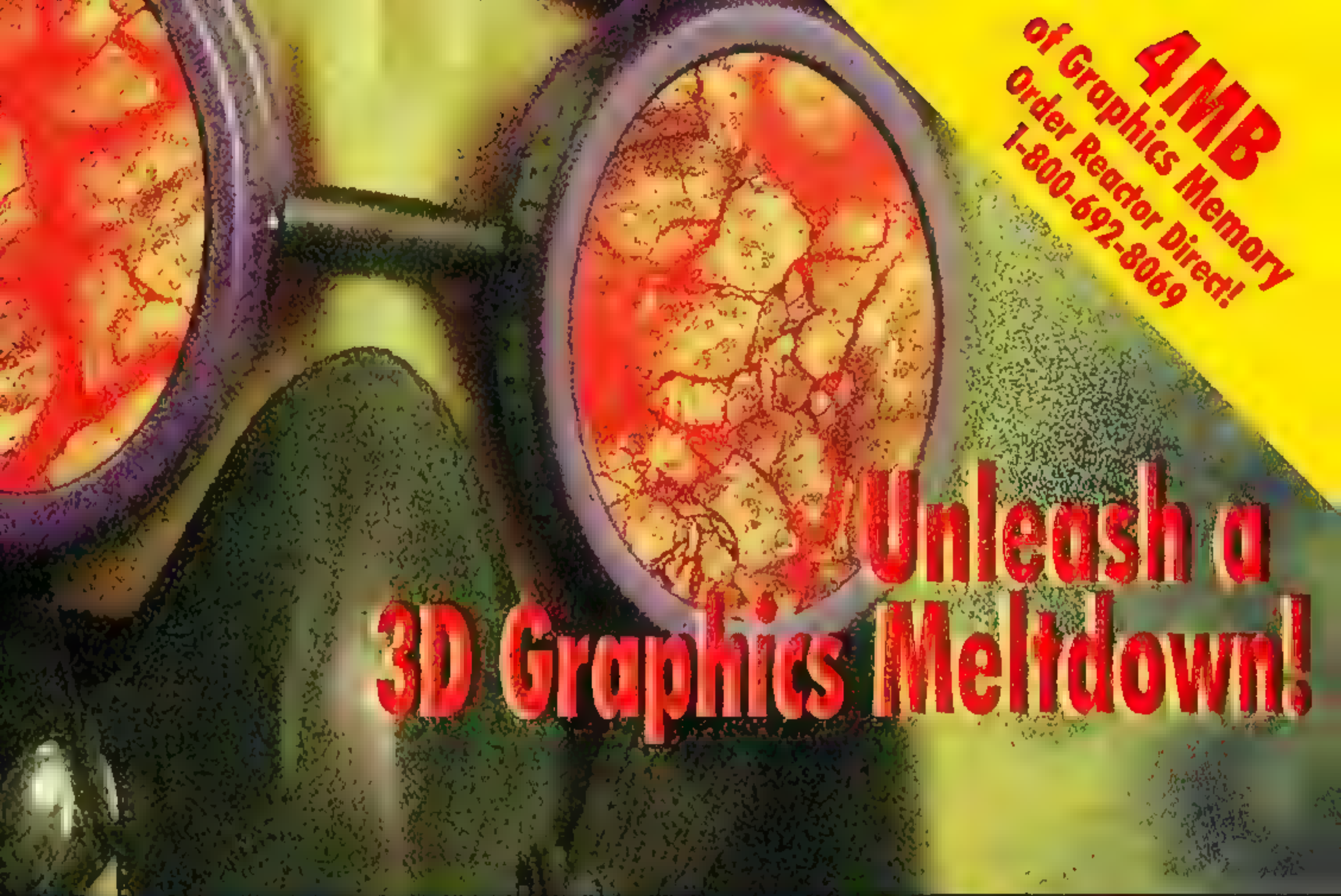
There are three tools that are invaluable in computer assembly. The first is a power screwdriver—the long, skinny kind, not the one that looks like a power drill. The second is a pair of small surgeon's forceps, for extracting and inserting jumpers in awkward places. The third is a set of spring loaded claws that allow you to retrieve screws and other tiny objects that may have fallen into awkward locations.

The Greater Whole

But how does it perform once it's all together? Check out our performance table—the benchmarks tell the story. The CPUMarks are pretty much the highest we've seen, the disk Winmark is a staggering 1300 and the CD-ROM Winmark almost reaches 1100. More importantly, DOS games cook along too, as evidenced by QUAKE running quite smoothly at 640 x 400. The Orchid Righteous 3D runs like greased lightning on the P6 setup, posting very high scores on the D3Dtest.

Wrapping It Up

Building a computer like this is no task for the faint-hearted. It's not so much the assembly that's difficult, but the time it takes to track down and identify best-of-breed components. Even if you can afford the $8,900 cost of entry, that's a lot of money in one fell swoop for something that will be obsolete shortly. Still, like the guys who build hot rods in their garages, there's something deeply satisfying about building your own machine, and knowing it's the best damn system money can buy—at least this month.



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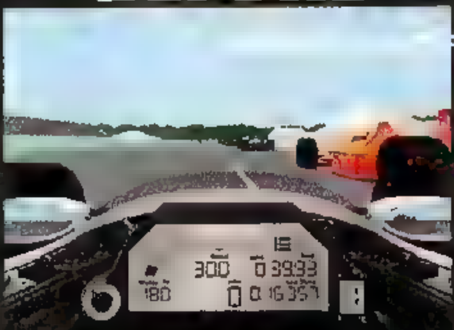
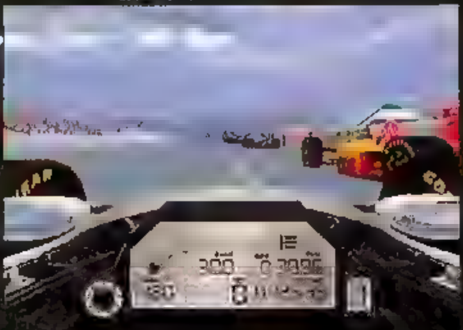


IndyCar with SVGA Graphics
Notice the jagged lines and edges and the flat, dull colors. Where's the crowd? What are these blocky things in the background? Are you really into this race?

AFTER



IndyCar with Reactor Graphics
Now you're racing! See the detail on next car. Watch those rearview mirrors — that's real 3D! Notice the crowd in the stands and the mountains in the background. And how about that sky!

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[illegible]

INTERGRAPH

CIRCLE READER SERVICE #74

Consulting The Ouija Board

This year's Ultimate Game Machine was the ultimate rig we could build at the time. Last year's system was a Pentium 133, but by the time the issue was out, the Pentium 166 and Pentium Pro had already begun shipping. Likewise, there are new technologies on the radar that will render obsolete even this year's ultimate system.

Unless you're really driven to skate on the bleeding edge, obsolete isn't necessarily bad, because it also means that the technology has usually improved. So a Pentium Pro 200 will be rendered obsolete by Intel's upcoming Klamath processor, but that doesn't make it a lousy system—it's still damned fast.

Processors

In the near term, MMX is the buzz. MMX is basically a set of matrix math instructions built into the P55C Pentium processor and the Klamath update to the Pentium Pro line. MMX can have a significant impact on the performance of certain graphics and audio applications. However, one thing is important to note: MMX will have a greater impact on the low end than the high end. A user who invests in high-fidelity audio cards and the hottest 3D accelerator may not benefit from MMX as much as someone with a Sound Blaster 16 and a low-cost 2D accelerator. Still, it's an exciting technology with some interesting possibilities.

The P55C Pentium processor will bring another performance enhancement to the table: a bigger Level 1 cache—32 KB instead of 16 KB—which will almost certainly improve performance across the board. The Klamath line will finally separate the Level 2 cache from the CPU, allowing for snap in cache modules of varying sizes. Klamath may also have a bigger Level 1 cache, and will also be available with clock rates exceeding 200 MHz.

Further down the road, there will be the Merced (P7) and other successors in the Intel line. Both Cyrix and AMD have new CPUs in the works—the M2 and the K6, respectively—that they claim will deliver Pentium Pro-class performance, and will have MMX instructions as well. Unfortunately, these chips weren't available at press-time, but we'll evaluate them soon and let you know what we find.

Graphics

The big news in graphics will be the arrival of Intel's AGP (advanced graphics port) on motherboards later this year. AGP will offer a very fast pixel pipe, allowing for data transfers as fast as the processor will allow. Unlike PCI, AGP is a true local bus, tied directly to the processor bus. Expect Intel's 3D graphics hardware, based on Lockheed Martin's Real 3D engine, to arrive in fairly short order after AGP hits the streets. Other graphics vendors are planning significant enhancements to current 3D accelerator technology. Some new high end graphics hardware will likely be based on the Microsoft Talisman 3D reference architecture.

The good news is that VGA will finally give up the ghost (we hope).

Connectivity

Another huge area of growth will be online, multiplayer games. Face it, folks: 28.8 modems really don't cut it for online play. Expect 56 Kbps modems to be shipping by the spring in quantity. Some of the phone companies are already experimenting with ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line), which allow very high speed into the home and reasonably high speed back out. Cable modems may finally become viable, although that's somewhat questionable, given the lack of standards. ISDN will still be a player, but the single biggest block to ISDN acceptance is the crazy-quilt tariffs charged by the different phone companies nationwide.

One sleeper technology is ATM. Already, 155 Mbit/sec ATM cards are available, but ATM lines into the home are too expensive right now for the average consumer.

Controllers

The analog game port may finally breathe it's last sometime in 1997. USB (Universal Serial Bus) is already beginning to show up on newer systems, such as Toshiba's Infinia systems. The advantage of USB is that a single port can allow daisy chaining of multiple peripherals. You could have your keyboard, mouse, joystick, rudder pedals and throttle all on a single USB chain.

Force feedback technology will finally arrive on the market, with CH's force feedback joystick and Thrustmaster's force feedback steering wheel adding a little more verisimilitude to the gaming experience.

Storage Technology

The big news will be DVD, the next-generation digital media after CD ROMs. DVD discs will look similar to CDs, but they'll be able to store 4.7 gigabytes of data or more per side, which should make game developers go berserk with more graphics and sound. Already delayed, DVD will probably arrive in a big way in 1997, though don't expect a preponderance of DVD-based titles for a while. That's okay, because DVD drives will read standard CDs, though early reports suggest disappointing performance reading standard CD-ROMs. DVD may also finally herald full acceptance of MPEG-2 video compression on desktop computers, since MPEG-2 will be used as the compression scheme of choice for consumer DVD movie players.

Hard disks will continue to plummet in price-per-megabyte ratios, but the ravenous appetite for disk space will still have us buying bigger and bigger disks. Ultra SCSI will become the replacement for fast SCSI, and a new standard, ultra-ATA may start replacing EIDE for low cost drives. The 1.44 MB floppy may finally fall by the wayside, with either the 120 MB, backward compatible optical floppy or Iomega's Zip drive taking the leadership role for "SneakerNet" storage.

Onward and Upward

All in all, it will be another busy year for the computer industry. Trying to keep up with it is a dizzying proposition. That's what we're here for, though, to help guide you through the technological minefields and find solutions that will help you create your own ultimate gaming platform. ⁂

If you play only one real RPG this year, it will have to be...

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #354

Frequent Flier

Decent Stick Offers On-The-Fly Programmability For A Song

by Dave Salvator

Joystick preference among sim connoisseurs is often the subject of heated debate. The downside is, many of these sticks, rock-solid though they are, tend to be expensive. ACT Laboratory has taken a different tack with their Eagle MAX, building a programmable joystick for well under $100. Some joysticks make programming a chore, but the Eagle MAX offers both an easily navigable Windows front end and on-the-fly programmability during gameplay.

The stick attaches to your joystick port. It has a pass-through for your keyboard's plug—to pass keyboard strokes from the stick's 10 programmable buttons—and a two-way rocker switch. Each of the 10 buttons can be programmed to enter as many as 10 keystrokes. Eagle MAX can emulate both a CH Flightstick Pro as well as ThrustMaster's Flight Control System Mark II. To program Eagle MAX during gameplay, you simply flip its Setup button on, hold down the desired joystick button, and press a key on your keyboard. Switch the Setup button off, and it's a done deal.

We put the Eagle MAX through its paces in MECHWARRIOR 2, LONGBOW, and both the DOS and Win 95 versions of FLIGHT UNLIMITED. Despite some interesting features and its ease of programming, the stick does have shortcomings. It's a little soft and lacks the subtlety and precision in more expensive sticks. You have to choose between using the view hat *or* the throttle, though you can enable the throttle and program the view hat to enter keystrokes.

Despite its shortcomings, the Eagle MAX does bring quite a bit to the party for about $70. For flight sim newbies or flyboys on a budget, this stick could be a good fit.

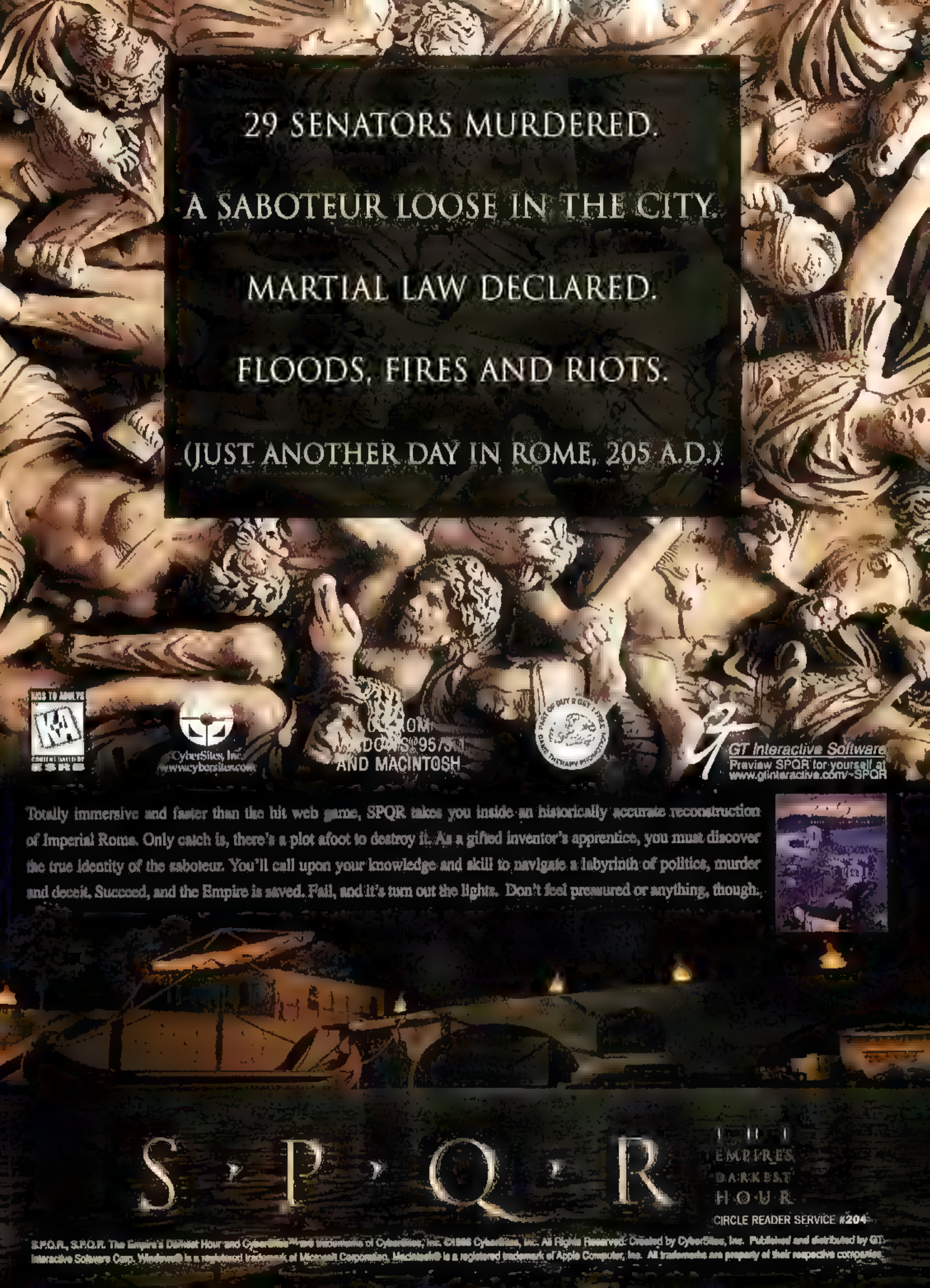
Price: $69.95
Manufacturer: ACT Laboratory, Ltd
Richmond, BC, Canada
(604) 278-3650
www.act.ab.com/gamegear
Reader Service #: 316

APPEAL: For gamers on a budget looking for an easy-to-program joystick.

PROS: Easily programmed during gameplay, good Windows utility to download up to four sets of commands.

CONS: Response not as subtle as more expensive sticks, and the view hat has imprecise feel.

CG RATED ★★★



Listen Up

Good Sounds Despite Somewhat Silly "3D" Features

by Dave Salvator

Price: $100 for JS 300 satellites. $90 for JS-900 woofer (approx street prices)
Manufacturer: Jazz Inc
(818) 336-2689
www.jazzspeakers.com
Reader Service #: 317

To get great sound out of your PC, you need a clean-sounding sound card and a wavetable synthesizer with a good General MIDI patch-set. But if you run them through a pair of crapola speakers, the overall effect will be disappointing. As with a home audio system, your largest investment should probably be your speakers. Jazz Inc. has been in the multimedia speaker game for some time, so we tried out their JS-300 satellites with their JS-900 woofer.

The JS-300s feature three "3D" stereo field enhancement settings using a technology from NEC. The 3D enhancement can be disabled, and has three different settings when enabled: Theater, Music, Game. Simple volume, bass/treble, and balance dials, along with headphone and microphone jacks and a mute button, round out the front panel controls.

During gameplay, we turned the JS-300's "3D" effect on, and tried the Game setting. The net effect seemed to be a slight widening of the stereo field and a gain boost in some of the midrange frequencies. We also listened to some CDs to try out the other "3D" settings (Music and Theater), and here we got roughly the same result. One annoyance: with the volume knob at about 50 percent maximum gain, we noticed a fair amount of ambient hiss coming from the JS-300s when they were sitting idle.

All told, the JS-300s deliver pretty good performance for both gaming audio and music. The 3D features do add a slight enhancement, but aren't really "3D" per se. Considering that sound card makers have 3D audio processors in the works, and Microsoft has shipped its Direct3D Sound API, speaker-based field wideners may soon be of little use. But that feature aside, this combination of Jazz speakers performs reasonably well.

▸PROS: Good basic overall sound, beefy bass with some tweaking.

▸CONS: "3D" effects don't help improve overall sound. Some

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #81

DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR:

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Master dozens of lethal weapons – from Prehistoric clubs to Wild West guns to futuristic lasers.

Over 80 Fierce Enemies
Defeat more than 80 real-time polygonal 3-D enemies from past and future battlefields.

Incredible Environments
Journey through stunning realms as characters are seamlessly integrated with gorgeous pre-rendered backgrounds.

Check out the demo at http://www.activision.com or http://www.mcafee.com/mforhome/ or visit us on America Online at Keyword "Activision" or on CompuServe at Keyword "Go Activision." Now available on MS-DOS/Windows 95 CD-ROM and Sony PlayStation.

CIRCLE READER SERVICE #38

Bad To The Bone

Harvester Is So Lousy, It Isn't Even Worth The Hype

CAN'T TALK; BLEEDING This is the kind of fun you'll have while playing HARVESTER. Come to think of it this might be more fun than the game itself.

HARVESTER arrives with a slightly sinister pedigree and a lot of hype. You may have heard about, or seen ads reacting to, its "controversial" nature. In actuality, that is just so much taradiddle. While the game is hardly worth bothering about, the attendant publicity makes some coverage necessary, so here it is.

Our hero, Steve Mason, wakes up in what is apparently the year 1953, with little or no memory Yep, we start off with the tired old amnesia gambit, and it's all downhill from there. Steve has a mom who is forever baking cookies, and a kid brother forever parked in front of the TV, watching Range Ryder blast an endless succession of hapless American Indians into bloody puddles. Steve's dad is secluded behind a locked door with a mysterious illness.

Wandering around the town of Harvest, Steve becomes acquainted with the inhabitants, many of whom have distinctly unpleasant personalities. The closest to normal are Edna, the widow who runs the local diner, and Stephanie, the girl Steve is supposed to be marrying soon. Stephanie, it turns out, is in the same predicament as Steve: she has no memory either. She's also the only one who doesn't urge Steve

> **“Harvester parades around as ‘controversial’ when it's really just silly and unpleasant.”**

Price: $49 95
System Requirements: IBM-compatible 486DX-33 or better processor, MS-DOS 5 0, 8 MB RAM (16 MB recommended), 2x CD-ROM (4x recommended) VESA-compatible SVGA video card; Sound Blaster-compatible and other major sound cards
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
Developers: DigiFX Interactive and Merit Studios
Publishers: Merit Studios
Dallas Texas
(214) 385-2353
Reader Service #: 318

CRYSTAL BALL

▸ Along with the upcoming BETRAYAL AT ANTARA, Sierra is hard at work on another big RPG title, BIRTHRIGHT: THE GORGON'S ALLIANCE, their first game based on the *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons* Birthright world licensed from TSR. Along with standard role-playing elements, the game, according to Sierra, will also feature both real-time and turn-based strategy (gamers can choose one or the other), along with Internet, LAN, and modem play. Sounds ambitious—now let's hope they can follow through.

▸ Last month we reported on Activision's "upcoming" graphic version of PLANETFALL. The company has subsequently announced that it's been put "on hold."

BIRTH TO SIERRA Sierra's upcoming BIRTHRIGHT will combine RPG, strategy, and combat elements in single- and multiplayer settings.

Daggerfall Update

The Elder Scrolls Chapter II
DAGGERFALL
Prepare to experience your new obsession.

Last month's issue featured my review of DAGGERFALL, but for several reasons an update is necessary. In particular, a report is needed on how well the patches are holding up, and, perhaps most important, I must make a correction to a major error in my previous article.

In the review I said that if a primary or major skill reached 100 percent, the character would stop gaining levels. That is not true. You can continue to gain levels after a skill maxes out at 100. The mistake came about because the official hint book explicitly stated level gains would stop, and—silly me—I believed it and passed that along (with some rather strong comments) in the review.

Sometime late, I was talking about this with someone who told me he thought he had seen a message somewhere online that indicated the cap had been removed. He couldn't recall what the message had said, or where he had seen it. Still, it was enough to make me nervous, as by then I had come across some other discrepancies in the book. The only way to be sure was to test it out myself. I created a custom character, parked him in the Fighters Guild, and began tedious rounds of spellcasting to force his primary magic skill to 100. After that I started working on a second magic skill, and, sure enough, not too many increases later he gained another level. So there was no doubt that the cap had been taken off.

While it was good to know the artificial limit had been removed, it wasn't so good that I had passed on erroneous information in the original article. Even though one expects the official hint book to be accurate on a matter this important, I should have checked it out first. My apologies to all for misleading you.

Patch Work

Moving to the patches, I have been through the game completely now a second time, and play has certainly been improved by the updates. The first one (v175) cleared up the problem I had been having with the game

continued on page 149 ▸▸▸▸

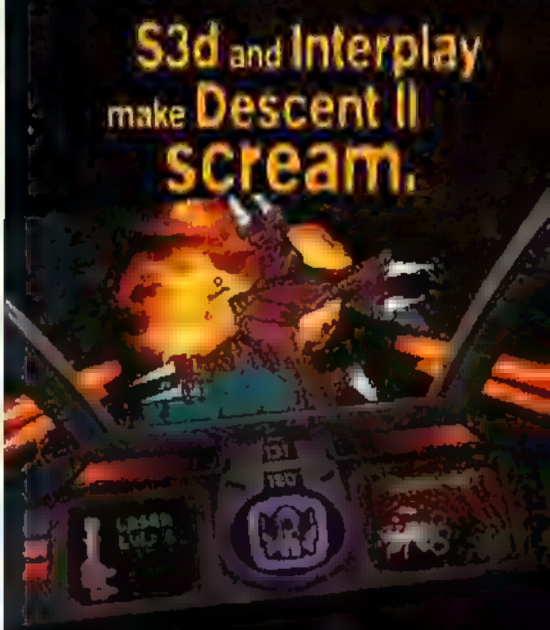
to join the "Lodge," which is the Order of the Harvest Moon. No one can really say much about it, except that it's the most important thing in town. For the game to progress, Steve has to join the organization.

OH BOY

Here's where the "game" begins. First he has to obtain an application from the postmaster, who happens to be a closet arsonist. Steve manages that by stealing police evidence and trading it for the application. Then he has to prove his worthiness by completing several tasks assigned by the Lodge's sergeant at arms. These tasks begin with simple vandalism and conclude with torching the town diner. Except for the vandalism, all these acts lead one way or another to the deaths of several people. Are we having fun yet?

Having proved himself, Steve now goes through Lodge initiation. Up to this point, there has been little actual violence on screen. That changes here, as the Lodge is three levels full of hostile people and critters, which Steve has to fight his way through using whatever weapons he can find. It is this section of the game that has the majority of the unpleasant graphics.

At the end of his journey through the Lodge, Steve is in the Chapel of Love,



Daggerfall Update

continued from page 147

crashing at random times, particularly during saves, along with some bugs in the code.

The second patch (v177), released much sooner than anticipated, fixed the incompatibility problem with Cyrix-based CPUs, as well as a few bugs. Bethesda, incidentally, tells me Cyrix will be engineering some changes in their chip to prevent similar problems with any other software.

The third patch (v179) contained more bug fixes, and, yes, a fourth is imminent; it should be out by the time you read this. All the patches are cumulative, incorporating previous fixes, so you only need the most recent patch file. You may also need the special FIXSAVE utility, since it's known that sometimes data becomes corrupted and this can't be repaired by a patch. FIXSAVE and the most recent patch (whatever it may be at the time) can be obtained from Bethesda's Web site, www.bethsoft.com, as well as from many of the online services.

For all that, you may still have problems. Two friends of mine are playing DAGGERFALL with the patches installed, yet the game crashes on them with a certain degree of frequency, and one has had other weird things happen from time to time as well. It turns out they are both playing under Windows 95.

My suspicion is that DAGGERFALL and Win 95 don't get along too well, in spite of the patches to date. I base this on the reports from my friends, messages I've seen online, and my own experience running strictly from DOS (I don't have Win 95 installed on my system). My suggestion is to play the game from DOS only, if at all possible, with the latest patch and with FIXSAVE on hand just in case. It certainly worked for me (though I never needed to use FIXSAVE at any time during play).

Obviously, any game that requires four patches in its first month on the shelves is not in good shape, and this points up all the more just how premature DAGGERFALL's release was. Yet there is no getting around the fact that the game is playable nonetheless, at least for some of us.

Second Time Around

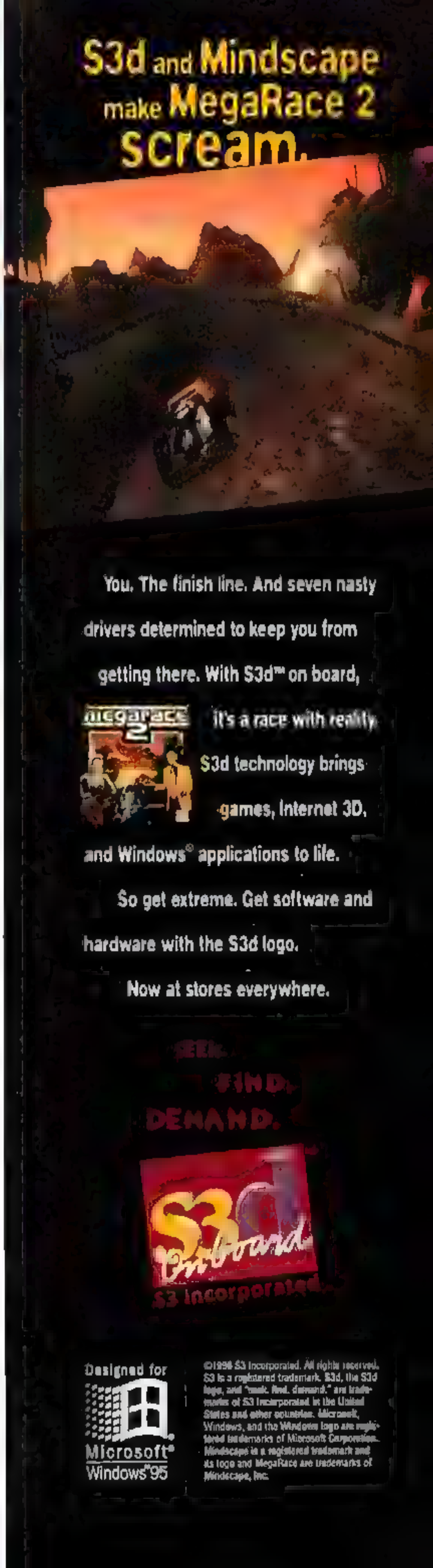
Having been through the game fully twice, and partway with two other characters (for the Thieves Guild and the Dark Brotherhood), I can say it is certainly better to join several guilds than to concentrate on only one. Variety is the key to keeping the game fresh, and the legitimate organizations are the best for this purpose. The Mages, Fighters, and various temples offer a good mix of dungeon crawls and day jobs (anything that doesn't send you into a dungeon). An occasional street quest can

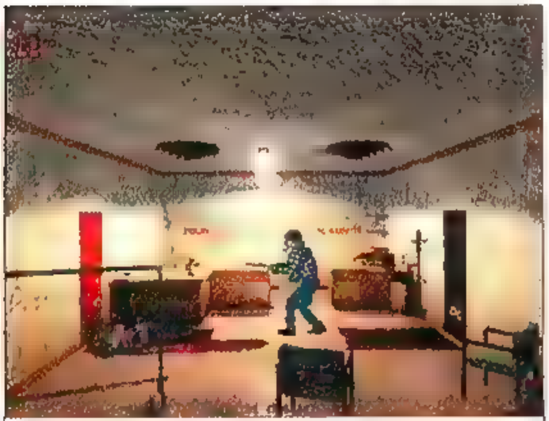
continued on page 151

along with Stephanie. Now comes the explanation (and be forewarned that I'm giving the story away here): except for the two teenagers, none of this is real. Steve and Stephanie are "enjoying" the very latest in VR technology, courtesy of the Order, whose purpose is to turn people into serial killers. Really.

I LOST MY HEAD This has to hurt. Almost as much as the $50 it would cost you to play the game.

Steve has to make a choice here. He can kill Stephanie (who will really die) and return to the real world. Or he can "marry" Stephanie, and they will appear to live out a full life in Harvest while the techs disconnect life support and kill them both in a matter of minutes. These are the game's only endings.





SHOOT FIRST Steve Mason, hero, prowls through the game looking for things to kill.

STUPID IS AS STUPID DOES

My general impression while playing HARVESTER was of something concocted by a couple of bright but immature high school students trying to gross out their elders. The game has little merit, as either an adventure or a story. The premise is ludicrous, the graphics are mostly pedestrian, the voice-overs distinctly amateurish, the puzzles unimaginative, and the ending quite unsatisfying. This mediocre product—and that's being charitable—would certainly sink from the shelves without a trace except for the inclusion of some blatantly offensive material and several nasty pictures.

So that's what we have here: an undistinguished game trying desperately to sell itself on the basis of nothing better than cheap shock value, parading around as "controversial," when it's really just silly and unpleasant. Any way you look at it, HARVESTER isn't worth anyone's time or money. ⅋

Daggerfall Update

»»continued from page 149

also help to perk things up a bit.

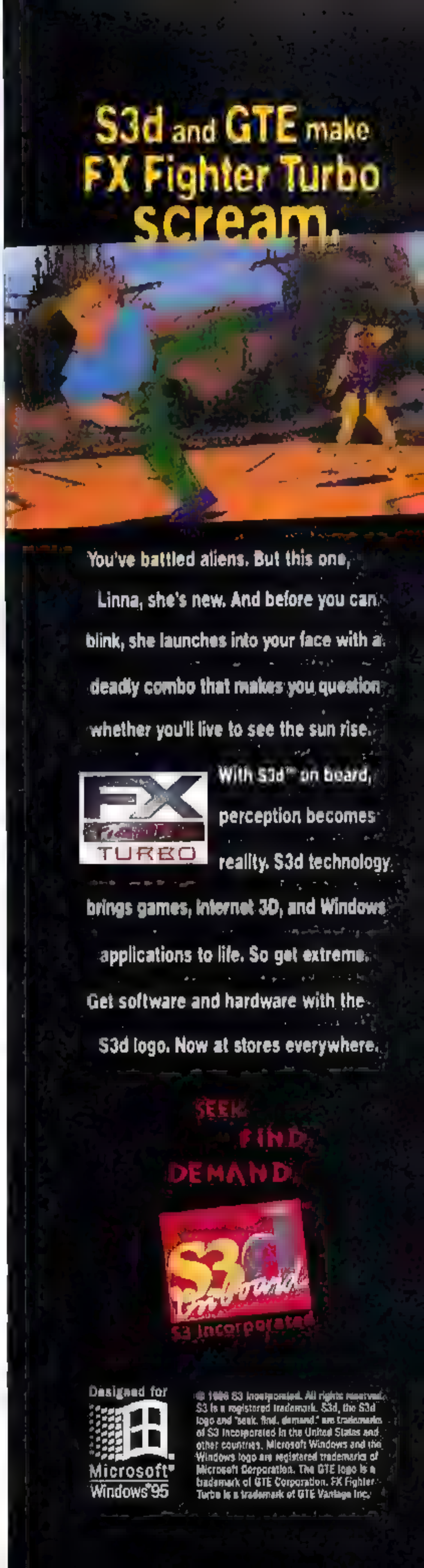
The Thieves Guild seems to be all day jobs. They start you off with fetch-and-carry ("take this there and bring something back"), then move you up to actual thefts at higher ranks ("go to this building or shop and steal this particular item"). I got my thief up to rank five in the guild, and the assignments didn't vary much but the pay certainly became better.

The Dark Brotherhood turned out to be something of a disappointment. At the lower ranks, they give only dungeon assignments and don't even pay for the work. It wasn't until my assassin reached Executioner rank that some gold was forthcoming and day jobs started showing up. These were always of the "go to a certain building in a certain town and kill someone" type; the "someone" made it easy by appearing almost immediately and attacking my character. At least so far as I got here, there seemed no room for any finesse or sneaky stuff.

Neither the Thieves nor the Brotherhood offer much in the way of neat benefits, and there didn't seem to be much reason to join either group unless you happen to enjoy being on the "opposite" side of the law. Belonging to either of these has no material effect on the game proper, so very likely, if you don't get caught in the act, you can go on to win as a thief or assassin.

One thing I felt lacking in the side quests (and which I'd like to see in the next game) is some tangible result from completing, or not completing, a quest—not necessarily affecting the main line, but just something somewhere in the game that occurs because of your having done/not done a particular task.

Overall, DAGGERFALL has been much improved by the patches to date. While the game is still far from being 100 percent, it can certainly be played and enjoyed in its current state without too much frustration.



All The Clues Fit To Print

Scorpia's Pen May Be Mightier Than Your Sword

It's that time of year again: Fred's putting up his shrunken head garland, the Christmas tree monster is standing in the corner, and everyone is waiting for Santa Claws (ahem, Claus) to come by with all sorts of gaming goodies to warm up those cold winter nights. In the meantime, though, we still have to deal with the mail on some older (and not-so-old) products.

CRUSADERS OF THE DARK SAVANT: A classic returns, and so do the questions. The reissue by Sir-Tech has introduced the wonders (and wiles) of Wizardry to a whole new set of gamers. For instance, the problem of the Serpent Mountains has proved difficult for some. You need a particular item, and you can only get that item from the top of Dane Tower. Waving it around in the right place at the right time just might open things up for you.

DAGGERFALL: There are a couple of points in the game where you have to talk to people on your own to keep the main story line going; you won't receive any happy little love notes from a courier. One of these is Direnni Tower—you don't have to go running right there after you know about the place. The other is getting to see Mynisera about the missing letter—you have to talk to someone not very far from her first. In both cases, you can take your time in activating the quests, they'll wait until you get to them (especially handy if you want to take some time out to build up your character a bit).

GABRIEL KNIGHT 2: Many gamers have trouble with Neuschwanstein still blinking (not finished) on the map, even though they've been through it with Grace many times (probably too many). One thing a lot of people miss (and it's easy to do) is the fact that they have to look *twice* at the fancy basin in the bedroom. Remember to play the tape, too.

I HAVE NO MOUTH AND I MUST SCREAM: Some folks playing the Gorrister scenario tend to be a bit bloodthirsty. There is no need to kill anyone during this section, and it's much better all around that you don't. If you're feeling heartless, take your beef out on something else (or was that take something out on the beef? —either way, a very close look is a good idea).

NORMALITY: Giving that Waffle statue in Mint Mall a coat of yellow paint is involved, but not really difficult. You can't, however, do it yourself; you'll need to trick someone else into doing it for you. First you have to get him out of the way (a doggone tricky task), then you heat things up a bit. The rest is automatic.

THE PANDORA DIRECTIVE [illegible]aling with the alien thing at Roswell is tough, and time is of the essence. You have to get rid of it before you can do anything else in here; this is not the moment for sight-seeing. Everything for this segment takes place on the entry level of the main complex; you don't use the elevators. The only rooms you need to visit are the kitchen, the two storage rooms, the dorms, and the generator room. Be prepared to restore once or twice anyway until you figure out exactly what needs to be done.

RIPPER: That clocks puzzle in the Wolford house has given some adventurers fits. First, you have to figure out which country each clock represents. Then they all need to be set to the same time. Which time? Ah, that's the question. Perhaps there's another clock around somewhere that could provide a clue for this. Don't let it stop you.

STONEKEEP: Having a hard time seeing the Faerie Queen? You need some flowers for this, and only one kind will do. By any other name, it would be the same. And besides that, you may find yourself going in circles, too.

Reach Scorpia at:

- **AOL**: Scorpia's Lair (keyword: scorpia)
- **Delphi**: GameSIG (Groups and Clubs menu)
- **GEnie**: Games RoundTable (type: Scorpia)
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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #123

DIFFICULTY LEVEL

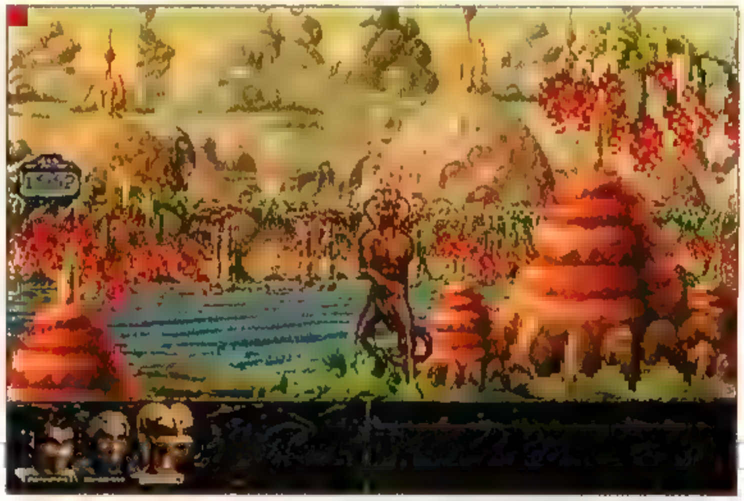
ADVANCED

Space Quests

ALBION Explores Role-Playing With Old-Fashioned Style

by Petra Schlunk

Now that DAGGERFALL and DIABLO are finally here, long-suffering role-players finally have something to sink their teeth into. After digesting those two, serious RPG fans may also want to check out Blue Byte Software's debut into role-playing games, ALBION, which has none of the hype of the bigger games but is actually quite good. Mislabeled by some as a science-fiction game, ALBION is instead a lengthy fantasy role-playing game reminiscent of older ULTIMA games.



FLOWER POWER Wandering around a large town shows off ALBION's exotic flora and an example of one of the new races, the Iskal, that you will encounter.

CRASH LANDING!

You play a pilot named Tom Driscoll who is on a large spaceship, the Toronto, in the year 2227. Tom must explore the ship before taking one of its shuttles down to a new, apparently barren planet—Albion—that is fated for resource exploitation. Unfortunately, something goes wrong and Tom crashes to the planet's surface.

Tom is rescued by some aliens, the Iskai, who nurse him back to health. Although he thought Albion was a lifeless desert rock, Tom soon discovers that the planet is actually rich with life. The story proceeds from here, with Tom visiting several areas of Albion. In each area there is a quest to complete before Tom can move on in his overall quest to find the Toronto. During Tom's travels he will pick up other party members (up to six in all), including an Iskai warrior and mage. While ALBION does not let you roll your own characters, character development proceeds through gaming experience levels, using skills such as spell casting, and training.

ALBION uses a first-person perspective with an automap in dungeons and many towns. The automap in towns marks places of note, and clicking on these marks will take the party to that location. In the many large and multileveled dungeons, of course, no such convenience exists. When traveling overland and inside buildings, the perspective is three-quarter overhead, and no maps hasten your travels. Traveling overland is particularly onerous since there is little to find and it takes a long time to get from one place to another.

The game's interface is somewhat painful to learn, but it is very easy to use once you are familiar with it. There are many objects to find, and it's okay to pick up what you see, as long as you don't steal something from stores. One nice feature is that it's impossible to drop necessary objects.

Unfortunately, gold is in short supply throughout the game. You can run around outside towns killing monsters to collect items to sell, but that is a problematic process, partly because combat is lengthy and partly because you don't get a lot of money from selling objects. Still, it pays to take time to do this, especially at the beginning of the game.

One difficulty of collecting items (even gold) is that characters can only carry so much, depending on their strength, and if they are carrying more, the party will not be able to move. Therefore, sell or drop what you can whenever possible. For traveling, it

Price: $50.00

System Requirements: 486 or better processor, MS-DOS 5.0 or higher (or Windows 95), 8 MB RAM, 3 MB hard disk space, 2x CD-ROM drive, VGA 256-color graphics, Microsoft-compatible mouse, supports most major sound cards.

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Publisher: Blue Byte Software
Schaumburg, IL
(847) 534-7950

Reader Service #: 320

Shopping Tips

ALBION lets you sell weapons, armor, potions, and other items you find, but selling items at shops requires some discrimination. All items you sell end up in the store's inventory, which has limited space. While this is good in that you can buy back items later, it's bad in that you can't sell everything you have. Sell only the most expensive (and expendable) items, dropping the cheap ones, and you should be fine.

In addition, be sure to examine all the articles in the shops you visit, as you will frequently discover valuable magic items and powerful weapons or armor to buy!

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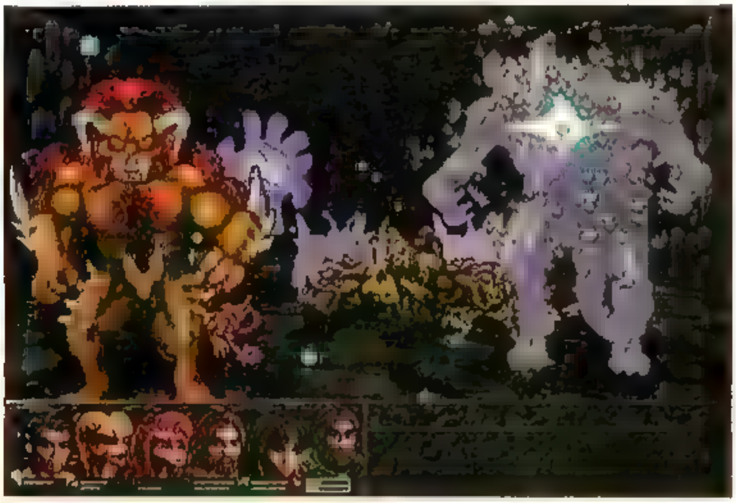


CHILL OUT Against Demons and Fears, cast Frost Avalanche—the game's best spell—to injure and paralyze your foes.

pays to be well stocked with food, since it is required for healing and magic point regeneration when you rest. Unfortunately, your party can only rest when it's tired, which isn't necessarily when everyone needs healing! This makes potions extremely valuable, as these replenish hit points and magic points.

CLOSE COMBAT

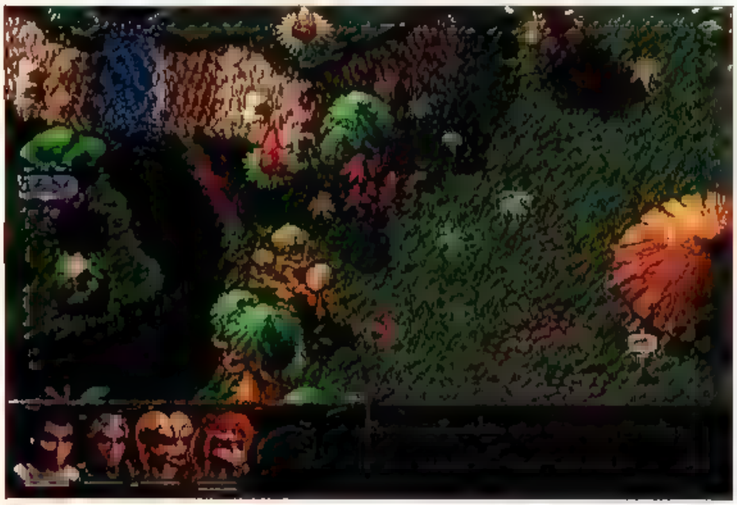
There are a lot of interesting characters in the world of ALBION. When conversing with an NPC you can choose from a list of topics to ask about, or you can give or show the character items in your inventory.

ALBION features a great deal of text, both through conversations and in various automated sequences at critical junctures. This may be disheartening for some, but I enjoyed it. Most of the text is not critical (skimming works well) and generally serves the function of fleshing out the alien world and its inhabitants for the gamer.

Of course, you will not only meet pleasant and interesting characters but also come across a lot of monsters, particularly in the game's many dungeons. This means that you'll spend a lot of time in ALBION's turn-based combat system. Combat takes place on a grid, and you can give orders to each of your

IT JUST MIGHT GIVE YOU A
GOD COMPLEX...

FRAGILE
ALLEGIANCE



ARE WE THERE YET? Outdoor travel in ALBION takes a long time, but is visually rewarding.

characters before starting a round. You can also get into any character's backpack and use as many potions for healing or restoring magic points as you desire.

In combat you can move around on the grid, attack monsters, cast spells, or flee. The best spell by far is Frost Avalanche, which eventually (spells become more powerful through use) can freeze all opponents for several turns and do damage at the same time. After successful combat, you pick up your loot, and characters gain experience points and maybe levels as well.

Characters do not die in combat if they lose all their hit points. As long as one party member survives, such characters can be restored through potions or resting. As another safety feature, ALBION offers 100 save game positions, more than enough for even the most compulsive game saver. The worst thing about combat is that it can take a long time (as long as 30 minutes), especially when you are casting a lot of spells.

Puzzles in the game may take a variety of forms. These include questioning NPCs repeatedly, finding hidden buttons, using pits to reach new areas, pulling levers to remove traps, and so forth. Timing can also play a part in solving puzzles. For example, there are places where doors won't open unless you stand on a pressure plate for several seconds.

BRAVE NEW WORLD

While ALBION has some problems, including areas that are too long or large (the outdoors and some dungeons), slow and lengthy combat, and a paucity of necessary gold, it offers a lot to role-playing enthusiasts. The game's story line is rich, with a nicely fleshed-out world to explore. The characters joining your party are interesting and useful to have around, for a variety of reasons. The VGA graphics and sound are fair — certainly not state-of-the-art, but workable. Other than a rare bug that did not allow ALBION to run on one of my computers due to a video-card conflict, the game runs virtually trouble-free. I found this lengthy game enjoyable to play and recommend it to lovers of role-playing games when another dry spell hits.

▸APPEAL: ALBION offers an old-fashioned, lengthy jaunt through a new role-playing world and should entertain true RPG fans.

▸PROS: A strong story line, numerous saved game positions, interesting spells, and a good combination of skill-based and experience-based character development.

▸CONS: Overly large areas, lengthy combat, and the real possibility of moving too far ahead in the story for the current strength of your party.

CG RATED ★★★

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DIFFICULTY LEVEL INTERMEDIATE

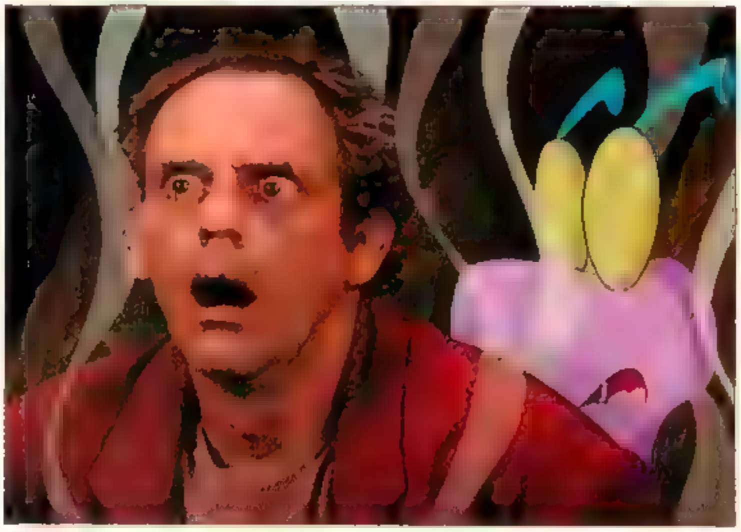
CG CHOICE

A Perfect Toon

Virgin's TOONSTRUCK Is A Wild And Wooly Comic Adventure Delight

by Petra Schlunk

It's been a long time since this reviewer has laughed out loud while playing a game. Computers and punch lines, it seems, often have a hard time mixing. But Virgin's new animated adventure, TOONSTRUCK, has me singing a different toon. This whacked-out game, which puts human cartoon Christopher Lloyd into a crazy animated universe, is a howling success—probably the funniest adventure game to grace our computer screens since LucasArts' classic DAY OF THE TENTACLE.

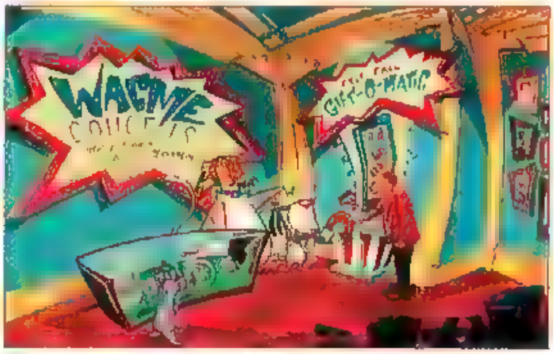


PURPLE HAZE Human cartoon Christopher Lloyd finally meets his match in the animated world of TOONSTRUCK.

DRAWING BLANKS

When the game begins, we are introduced to haggard, absent-minded cartoonist Drew Blane (Lloyd), the creator of the highly successful "Fluffy Fluffy Bun Bun Show." His day has started badly with a missed dentist appointment, and now he's late for a meeting with his boss. Rushing in belatedly, he learns that the boss has done a little "creative" thinking and has decided that the "Fluffy Fluffy Bun Bun Show," featuring a disgustingly cute bunny of the same name, needs some new life: even *more* disgustingly cute little bunnies. And Drew has just 24 hours to come up with the new artwork.

Sometime in the middle of the night, while Drew is still drawing blanks, his television suddenly lights up with the "Fluffy Fluffy Bun Bun Show," and before he knows what's happening, he finds himself sucked into the cartoon world of Cutopia, a place where everyone is so cute and nice and wonderful you'll positively want to vomit. Here he comes face-to-face with his favorite cartoon creation, a sarcastic purple toon named Flux Wildly, who joins him as he sets out to look for a way back to the real world.



ANIMAL MAGNETISM You'll need to collect more than the usual adventure game bag o' tricks as you guide Drew and Flux through TOONSTRUCK's myriad puzzles.

Price: $59.95
System Requirements: 486 66 (Pentium recommended), MS-DOS 5.0 or higher, 8 MB RAM (16 MB recommended), 30 MB hard drive space, 256K SVGA video card (1 MB recommended), 2x CD-ROM drive (4x recommended), mouse; 16-bit stereo sound card (recommended)
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
Designer: Burst
Publisher: Virgin Interactive
Irvine, CA
(800) 874-4607
Reader Service #: 319

To get home, Drew consults the King of Cutopia (a giant smiley face on a robe), who assures his escape only if he will help Cutopia counter the nasty plots of Count Nefarious, ruler of the nearby Malevolands. Nefarious has constructed a Malevolator that zaps cute toons and their neighborhoods, turning them into evil, nasty toons and slums. The king wants Drew to help his engineer construct a counter-Malevolator, a Cutifier, that will reverse these effects. This is the point at which you, as Drew, enter the action of the game.

TOON TALK

Traveling through the cartoon lands of Cutopia, Zanydu, and the Malevolands is quite a treat. Everything you see and experience in the game is as if you were watching an old Warner Bros. cartoon. In each area of the game, peppy and evocative cartoon music plays in the background, and standard cartoon sound effects highlight many of the animations.

With humor that ranges from cutesy to risqué, TOONSTRUCK keeps the laughs coming nonstop. Among the many characters you'll meet on your travels is an

Die. Die. Die.

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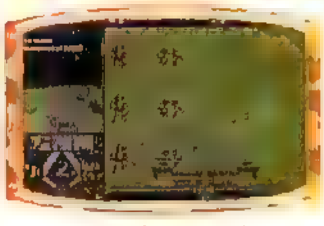

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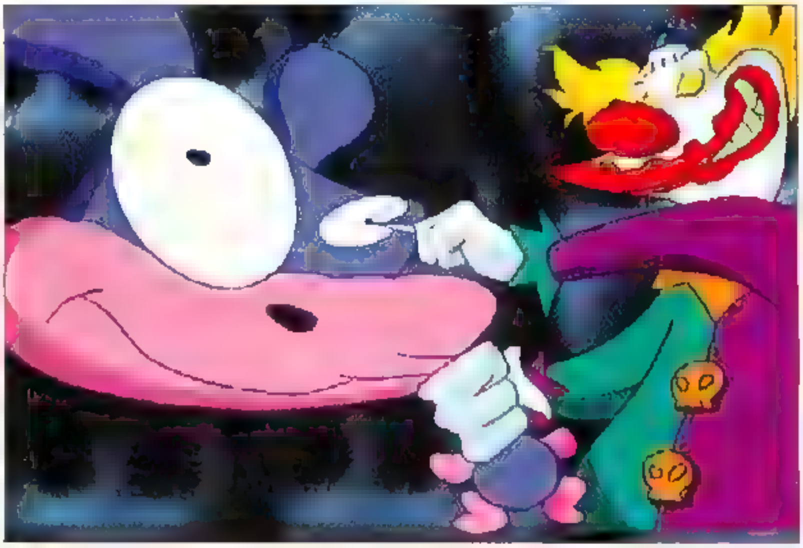
CIRCLE READER SERVICE #263



TEARS OF A CLOWN Meet Spike, evil clown and eye-poker. This is just one of the bad guys you'll have to confront as you work your way toward defeating the evil Count Nefarious.

Irish-Scottish bartender—a shamrock in a kilt—whose speech alternates between an Irish brogue and a Scottish burr; a Valley Girl costume-shop owner who quotes from Camus; and a flexing, muscle-bound bulldog who walks around insulting lesser physical specimens in the style of the old "Hans und Franz" routine from TV's *Saturday Night Live*. Oh yeah, there's also a busty, latex-clad dominatrix sheep named Polly—in case you were wondering whether this was a kid's game or not.

Conversations throughout TOONSTRUCK are hilarious, and the voices behind the characters are brilliant. The game features a host of stars providing voice work, including Tim Curry, of *Rocky Horror* fame, as Count Nefarious; Dom DeLuise as Fingers the arcade owner; and Dan Castellaneta (the voice of Homer Simpson) as Flux Wildly.

Conversations are presented both in audio and as text (though you'd never want to play this with the sound down), and the interface for conducting them is extremely simple to use. Conversational options are represented as graphics that you can click on to move things along. One of the standard conversation graphics is an ice cube (for "breaking the ice" with a character) that allows the conversation to follow general lines. The ice cube melts slowly as the conversation flows and ends up as a little puddle of water when all general topics have been exhausted.

DYNAMITE GAMEPLAY

Of course, because this is an adventure game, you'll find many things to examine, grab, and manipulate as you make your way back to the real world. You can place items in your inventory (once you retrieve the convenient "bottomless bag" from the Royal Engineer) and use them on one another and on characters and other items in the game. No cartoon would be complete without a lot of explosive slapstick, so there's also a shop in Zanydu that sells novelty items with nasty surprises that will serve you well in your adventures.

Many of the puzzles in TOONSTRUCK are solved, appropriately enough, by thinking about how you'd expect things to work in a cartoon world. Of course, aiming your brain in that direction sounds easier than it sometimes is, especially if your brain is geared toward how things work in "real life" (which isn't true of all computer gamers). The bonus comes with the wild animations, sound effects, and genuine cartoon feel that accompany your experimentation and successful solutions to puzzles.

Thankfully, Drew Blanc and Flux Wildly can do a lot of silly things that not only don't result in death (nothing seems to actually kill you, but there are a lot of saved game positions, just in case.) but also make TOONSTRUCK fun to play. Drew can even "use" Flux to help him solve some of the puzzles he encounters.

While object manipulation is the basis of many puzzles in the game, TOONSTRUCK has a wide variety of puzzle types that will keep you happily occupied for quite some time, including wordplay, logic, and arcade-type puzzles. At key junctures in the game, after you've solved certain important puzzles, the action segues with a "Meanwhile...," and a short cartoon sequence reveals what is happening elsewhere in the toon world. Many strange things will happen to the world as Drew and Flux search for the missing Cutifier parts. And gamers should beware—the game is not over once the Cutifier is fixed! A plot twist at this point leaves Drew in the foul dungeon in Count Nefarious' castle, a place that he must escape before he can make his way back to the real world.

THAT'S ALL, FOLKS

TOONSTRUCK is a hilarious, first-rate romp through a goofy cartoon world. With many puzzles, humorous conversations and characters, unexpected plot devices, masterful voice work, and more, this game is well worth playing by anyone who appreciates a good laugh. Give the game's developers, Burst, a lot of credit. At a time when many adventure games are trying to outdo each other with violence and ponderous, MYST-like story lines, TOONSTRUCK is a real breath of fresh air, a Saturday morning cartoon for your computer screen. With a dominatrix sheep.

▸APPEAL: TOONSTRUCK is a funny, engaging cartoon adventure that will amuse adventure gamers and cartoon fans alike.

▸PROS: Comical characters and conversations, an entertaining story, and excellent voice work make this humorous game an all-out delight to play.

▸CONS: Almost none, but gamers with delicate sensibilities should be aware that some of the humor is risqué. This is not a kid's game.

The good news is, you've just inherited an island resort from your dead uncle.
The bad news is, your uncle was one twisted son of a bitch.
6
3
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60
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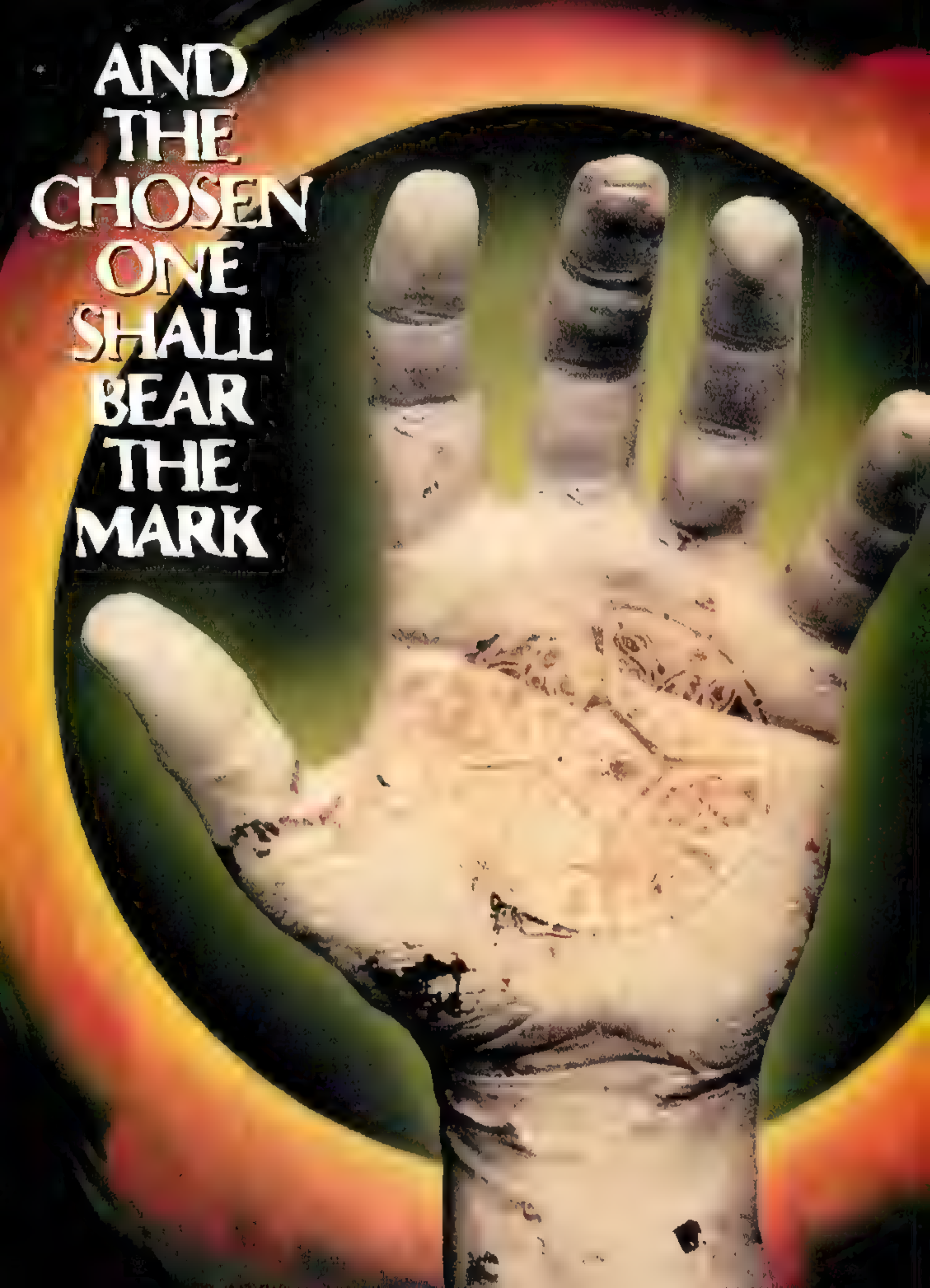
9
EXPLORE the INSANITY
9
GT Interactive Software
CD-ROM


AND
THE
CHOSEN
ONE
SHALL
BEAR
THE
MARK

THE APOCALYPSE HAS BEGUN

All seven seals have been broken. Every evil that plagued the earth has become incarnate, disturbing the balancing force between good and evil, man and spirit.

FRIGHTENINGLY DETAILED 3D ENVIRONMENT WITH INTERACTIVE OBJECTS AND PREDATORY DEMONS.

[illegible] OBJECTS, PUZZLES, [illegible] CHALLENGES.

Not only have you stumbled blindly into a nightmare, you've set the stage for the Apocalypse.
And now only one can stop it.
He who bears the mark. The chosen one. You.

Presenting a terrifying 3D adventure unlike anything you've experienced before. **Realms of the Haunting.** The forces of darkness are gathering for the final showdown.

- OVER 600 INTERACTIVE OBJECTS INCLUDING MORE THAN 155 POSSIBLE INVENTORY ITEMS - MAPS, WEAPONS, AND MAGICAL OBJECTS.
- USER-DEFINED CONTROLS ALLOW CUSTOMIZATION IN ADVENTURE AND COMBAT LEVELS.
- SOPHISTICATED CHARACTER INTERACTION WITH A REAL-TIME, FIRST-PERSON, FULL 3-D ENVIRONMENT.

FULL MOTION VIDEO, COMPLEX AND INTELLIGENT PLOT BRANCHING AND MULTIPLE ENDINGS

Realms of the Haunting™

THE BATTLEGROUND BETWEEN ULTIMATE GOOD & EVIL.

AVAILABLE FOR PC CD-ROM

Interplay
BY GAMERS. FOR GAMERS.™

CIRCLE READER SERVICE #269

★★★

DIFFICULTY LEVEL
EASY

Strange Interlude

Long On Weirdness, Short On Gameplay, 9 Is A Unique But Brief Diversion

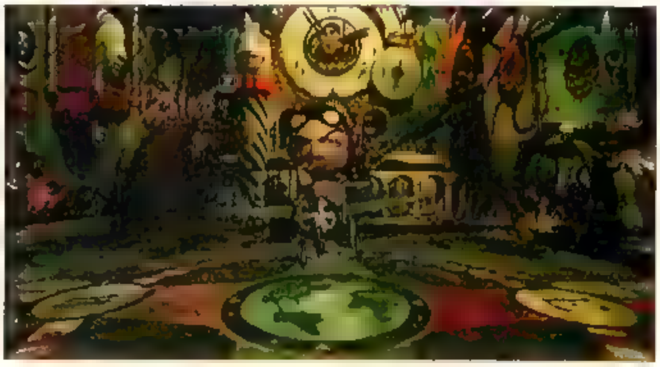
by Robert Coffey

Like the pump organ that is its centerpiece, 9 is a game that pulls out all the stops, distinguished by richly detailed, weird art, an original story line, and name talent like Christopher Reeve, Cher, and James Belushi. But while the title of this MYST-on-acid effort refers to muses of creativity, it also lets you know about how many hours it should take to complete the game. For all its originality, 9 is hampered by exceptionally brief playing time, a brevity abetted in large part by the unchallenging nature of its puzzles.

OH, FOR A MUSE OF FIRE

The game begins with your inheritance of the Last Resort, a decidedly bizarre getaway designed to generate inspiration for creative types, formerly owned by your late, eccentric uncle, Thurston Last (Christopher Reeve). Upon arriving to claim your inheritance, you realize something has gone terribly wrong. In order to save the resort you must deal with the nine muses that reside there, rebuild the Muse Machine (built by Uncle Thurston to amplify creative energy), and defeat the evil Toxic Twins, who are twisting your uncle's legacy to serve their own nefarious purposes. Failure means the end of music, beauty, and art—certainly a more novel premise than the countless "end of the world/mankind/your life" threats that drive so many games.

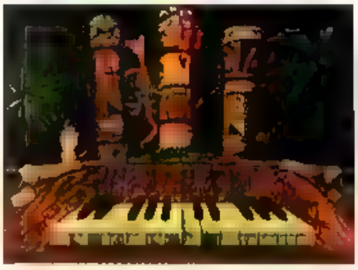
The Last Resort is rendered in the lush, detailed SVGA graphics that have become *de rigueur* for artsy-fartsy adventure games since MYST. But the world of 9 is its own fascinating animal, an off-kilter melange of carnival kitsch, '50s-era advertising art, South Pacific tribalism, and plain old-fashioned weirdness. I was particularly fond of the portrait of a huge, multiple-eyed flesh potato reading to a cute little girl.



GET ME A SWATTER! Salty, caretaker of the Last Resort, is as unwelcome as the recent work of actor Jim Belushi, who provides his voice.

Despite the striking originality in art direction, 9 offers nothing new in terms of puzzles. There are the mandatory locked doors as well as a sequencing puzzle, a steam engine that needs starting, and a rhythmic round of follow the leader. Pretty standard stuff, and none of it offers much of a challenge.

Two arcade-style games break up the puzzle solving. While both are fun and fit the overall spirit of 9, gamers looking for a more standard adventure game experience may find them frustrating and a detriment to gameplay. The Shoot-a-Rat game is particularly difficult, and can disrupt the flow of the game as it repeatedly thwarts your efforts to recover the final



SIGHT-READING MADE LOOPY Translating the code on the tikis into music is at the heart of 9's gameplay

piece of Thurston Last's great invention.

Otherwise, the big-name voice acting does the job in an efficient if unspectacular manner. If there's one place where 9 stands head and shoulders above the rest, it's in the terrifically entertaining and inspired end sequence that rewards those who finish the game. Think Busby Berkeley gone berserk. If the same expenditure of talent so evident in the ending had gone into the puzzles, 9 would be a real winner. ✂

Price: $54.95
System Requirements: 486-66 or better, Windows 95, 16 MB RAM, 15 MB hard drive space, SVGA 256-color graphics, 2x CD-ROM drive, mouse; Sound Blaster- or 100%-compatible sound card, QuickTime 2.1 for Windows (included); Macintosh version also available.
Protection: None (CD-ROM must be in drive)
Designer: Tribeca Interactive
Publisher: GT Interactive
New York, NY
(212) 726-6500
Reader Service #: 321

▸APPEAL: Adventure gamers who savor a visually rich walk on the weird side.

▸PROS: Original plot; intriguing, one-of-a-kind art; one of the most rewarding and inspired ending sequences in recent memory.

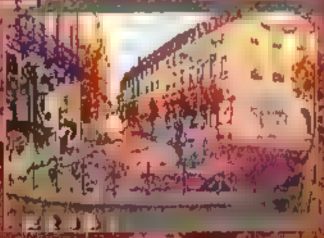
▸CONS: Nonchallenging puzzles; exceptionally short game time; arcade sequences could frustrate some gamers; James Belushi.

RATED ★★★

Unlock the legend of the Knights Templar.

And discover a secret too frightening to unveil.

CIRCLE OF BLOOD

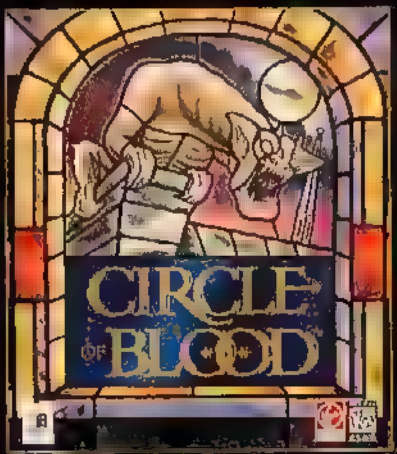


"With its lush, detailed animation, *Circle Of Blood* resembles the classic arcade game *Dragon's Lair*. But it seems this time the game will play as good as it looks."

– CD-ROM TODAY

- High resolution animations hand drawn with painstaking detail by Don Bluth Studios alumni *(All Dogs Go To Heaven* and *An American Tail)*
- Features a cinematic musical score from the talents of soundtrack producer Barrington Phelong *(Truly, Madly, Deeply* and *Nostradamus)*
- Available for Windows® 95/DOS CD-ROM and MAC CD-ROM

American George Stobbart happens into a Parisian cafe one afternoon because he wants a cup of coffee. But after a clown delivers a plastic explosive that blows the place to smithereens, all George Stobbart wants are some answers.



Buried deep beneath the bodies and the rubble of that explosion lies a fourteenth century medieval order called The Knights Templar. Only you can unlock the secret of this intriguing historical adventure and stop the vicious conspiracy that threatens to reshape the world.

CIRCLE READER SERVICE #117

Wacky Sports-Action Games

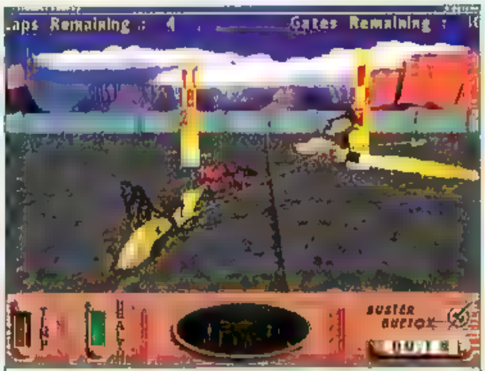
Action Gladiators Do It With Rockets Between Their Legs

I count myself among the tolerant. I do not honk immediately when a red light turns green. I do not make a scene when someone cuts into line at the movies. The puppy makes a puddle on the floor, and I'm cool with it.

But that same tolerance typically ebbs when I'm faced with action games based on, for want of a better description, "non-traditional sports." I can think of exactly two made-up sports-action games that I've liked over the years. Brutal Sports Football's medieval incarnation of pigskin was brought home by its over-the-top violence. And Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe had this amazing structural integrity. It was built of stone, and you could almost believe it was a sport.

But most of the others just serve as bookends for the games around them. I suspect it has something to do with their lack of grounding in the real world. A real sport isn't simply a game: it is people and places and history. When you play computer baseball, you're not swinging a bat or pitching a ball. A hundred years of swung bats and pitched balls are hanging invisible in the air about you. By contrast, invented sports have no history to them.

Perhaps there's hope, though, both for me and for the genre. A few weeks ago, I got my hands on a beta of Rocket Jockey (from Rocket Science and SegaSoft) that kept me up late two nights running. Before I remembered that I couldn't stand this sort of game, I was having too much fun to stop.



ROCKET-STEER Turning the rocket isn't easy, but you can use cables to latch onto pylons—and clothesline your opponents.

> I can think of exactly two made-up sports-action games that I've liked over the years.

AMERICAN (BIKER) GLADIATORS

The designers for Rocket Jockey seem to have taken their inspiration from those postwar magazine covers touting a "better future through science." It's gladiatorial combat between contestants mounted on rocket-powered bikes. You roar around an enclosed space with the object of keeping your seat while helping everyone else lose theirs.

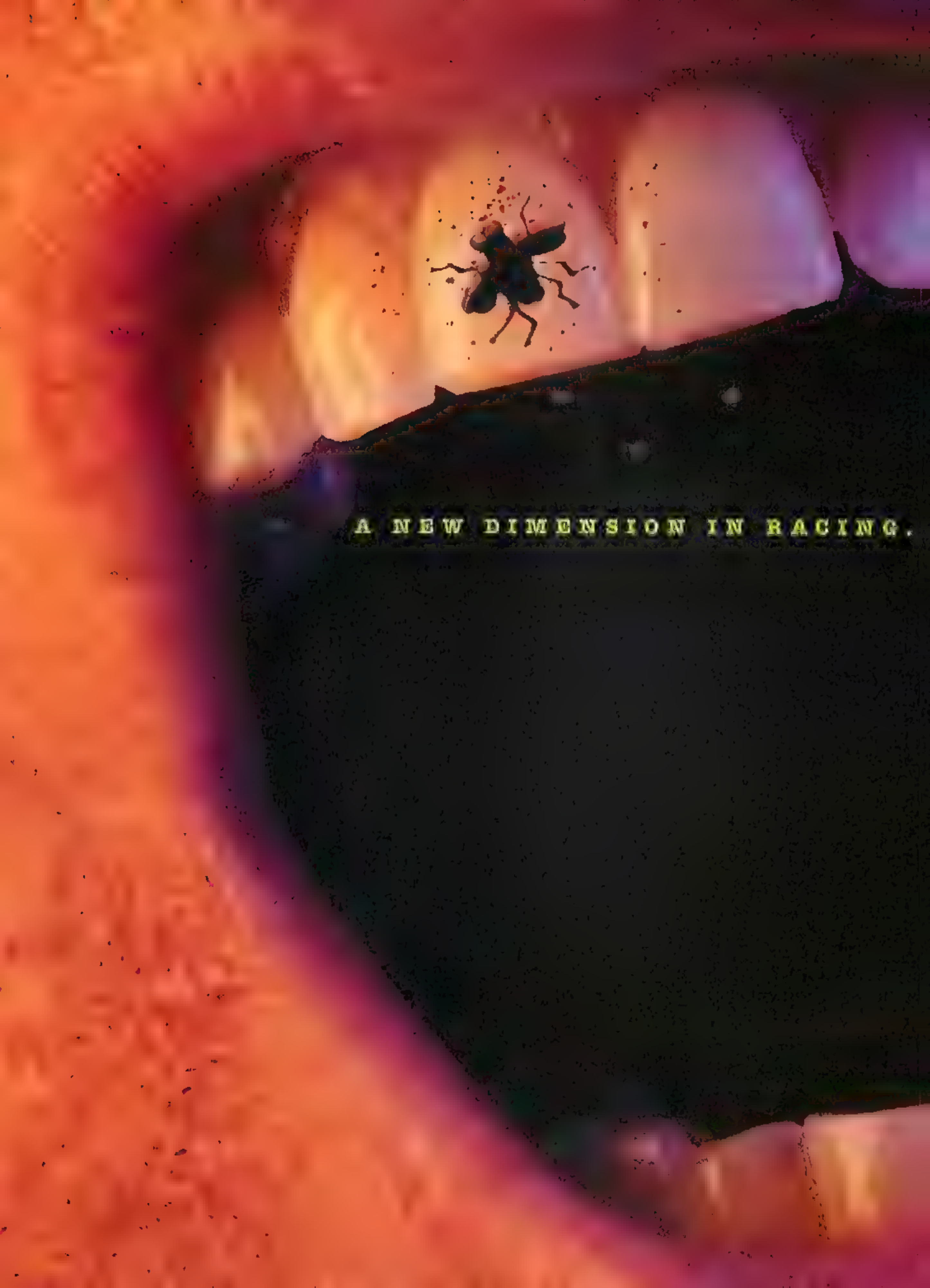
Easier said than done. The bike is a bit tough to control—it's a rocket, after all—and leaning this way or that only turns this imperfectly guided missile at a shallow angle. Hence, the game is forgiving when you crash into side walls, fences, and towers on the playfield, an action that typically deflects you back into the fray.

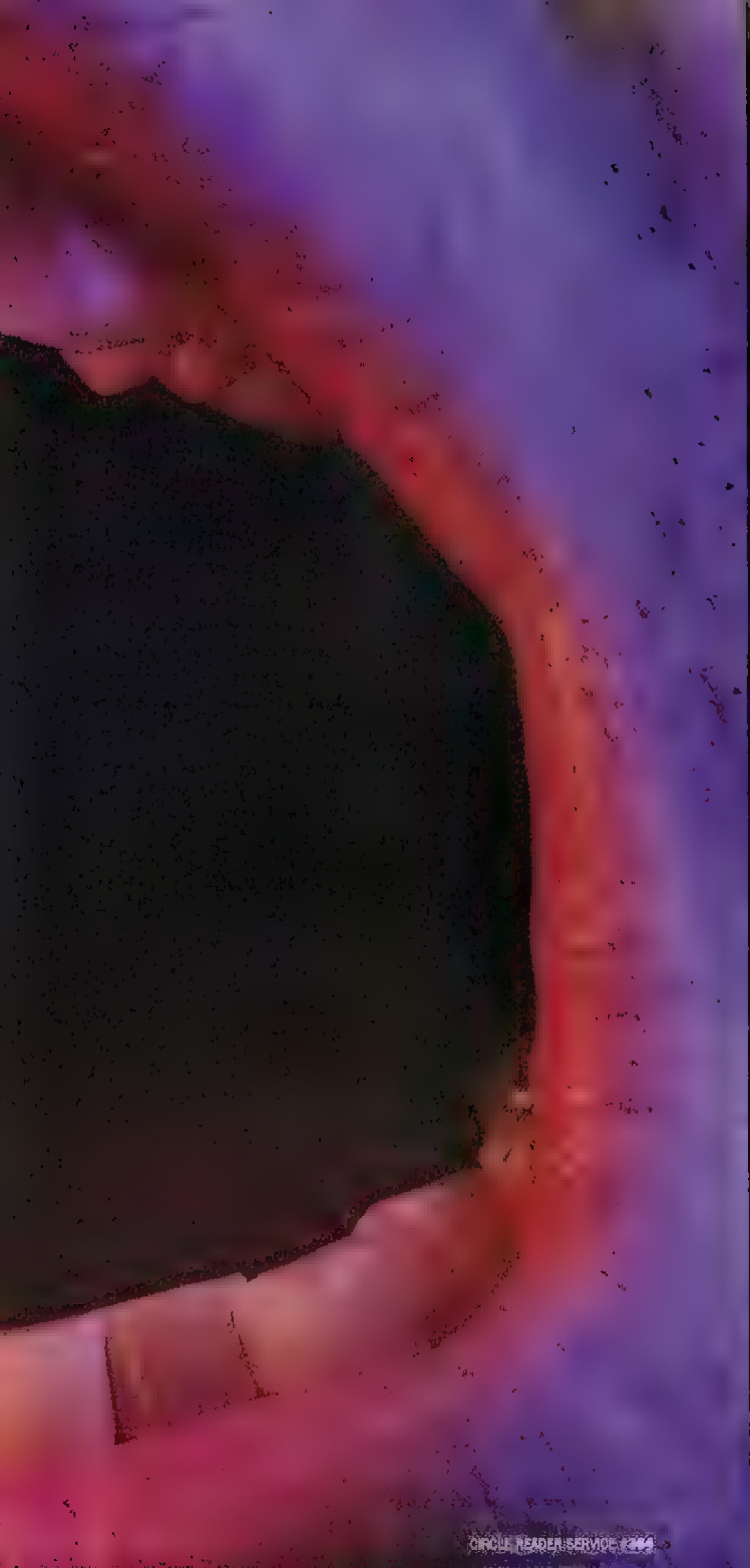
To make maneuvering in this cumbersome vehicle easier, you're given the ability to fire a steering cable to the left or right of your vehicle (think Batman on a speederbike). The shorter the cable that connects you to an object, the tighter the turning

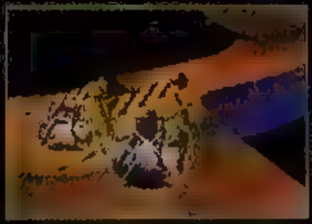
INSIDE ACTION

Sega is bringing two of its best driving games over to the PC. Early Windows 95 versions of Sega Rally and Daytona USA suggest they'll be almost identical to the Saturn originals. (Daytona's kept intact the ability to race in the wrong direction and the goofy music.)

EASY LEFT The intense off-road racing of Sega Rally Championship will be coming to PCs some time in early January.


A NEW DIMENSION IN RACING.





radius. Another click releases the cable so you can move on.

The cable usually anchors on the scenery. With practice, you'll be able to target the bombs and rockets strewn about the landscape...and rival rocketeers. You can either clothesline them by firing a straight cable across their path, or hook onto them and drag them along in a punishing circle before dumping them in a distant corner.

And that's just the "war" scenario. There's also a rocket-jockey slalom and a challenging game of rocket soccer. Hopefully the final version will have some team interaction.

OK, this title still might lack that requisite sense of history that I mentioned to qualify as sports. That quality only time can provide. But we're talking action-sports, and in this case, the action definitely is fun. Besides, I'm a tolerant fellow. I can adjust.

CG TIPS!

Star Control 3 Hypermelee Tips

If you haven't tried the Hypermelee action in STAR CONTROL 3, it's a blast. You can have the computer fight Hypermelees for you, but then you'd be a little girlie man, and what's worse, the computer doesn't always fight intelligently. It's far better to take the helm and do the dirty work yourself. Besides, it's incredibly fun and addictive, and, with these tips, easier than you think.

CHMMR AND GET SOME The Chmmr Avatar has the most powerful beam weapon in Hypermelee, but it's too slow to catch quick ships.

The balance of power in Hypermelee is similar to the old Paper-Rock-Scissors game. When you encounter the Daktaklakpak, always fight them with your Precursor vessel or Doog ships. Your Precursor ship has a homing defense system that will tear apart a Dak ship before it can lock its mandibles onto you, while a Doog ship has a primary homing missile gun that does practically the same thing. No other ships will do as well as these two against the Daktaklakpak. Don't use the computer to fight the Daktaklakpak because it will choose the Chmmr Avatar, which is terribly ineffective against the Dak ships.

Against the Vux, it is best to use the Pkunk Fury. The Vux are the only race with the special ability to start Hypermelee right next to their opponents. Even though the Intruder is a painfully slow ship, this special ability means the Vux are automatically within range when Hypermelee starts and can begin carving into your ship with their powerful lasers before you even have a chance to move away. If you use the Pkunk Fury, you can speed away instantly, before the Vux get a bead on you, and then maneuver behind them and unleash your steaming pellets. Most other ships are too slow to escape the initial onslaught.

Against the K'tang, the Doog's rapid-fire homing missiles are perfect. In fact, once you acquire Doog vessels, they are a very good pick for nearly any battle since their primary weapon will home in on an enemy vessel no matter its position. You don't even have to turn around to shoot a ship behind you: the Doog's auto aiming missiles will simply shoot out from the back and fry the bogey.

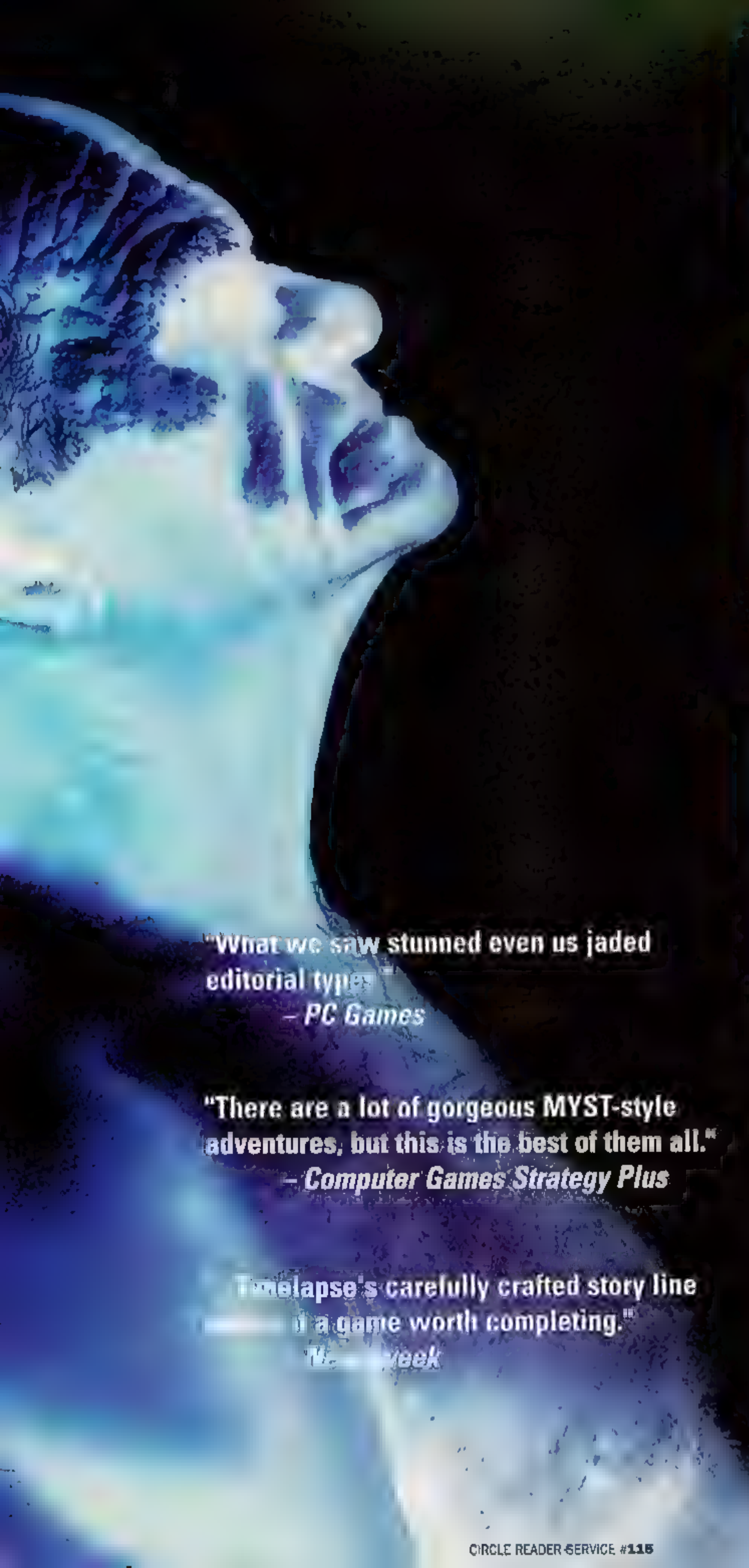
UTWIG JUGGERNAUT The Utwig ship, the Jugger, is perfect against the Owa ships (shown here) and Heralds. Their four-pronged guns don't deplete energy, so you can fire with impunity at your enemies.

Generally speaking, though the Chmmr Avatar is probably the single most powerful vessel, it really shouldn't always be your vessel of first choice. It is rather slow, and won't be able to catch up to Pkunk Furies, Daktaklakpak ships, or other quick vessels. Those vessels will be hard pressed to damage you because of your defense satellites, but you will only achieve a frustrating standoff that could last for minutes. Use the Avatar when you know you are fighting slower ships like Vux Intruders, K'tang ships, or Doog vessels. The best ship to use by default is the Ur-Quan Dreadnought, which loses in very few battles.

Against the Heralds at the end, use Utwig Juggers. Absorb their initial barrage of missiles with your shields, let them exhaust their energy, and then fire away at the origin of the missiles. You can get off a few good shots before they regenerate enough energy for another missile attack; at that time, power up your shields again. Repeating this process will lead to a swift victory. Juggers are also ideal against the Owa ships.

JOURNEY TO ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS.
DISCOVER AN ALIEN RACE AND SHATTER
THE THEORIES OF MODERN SCIENCE.

PC & MAC

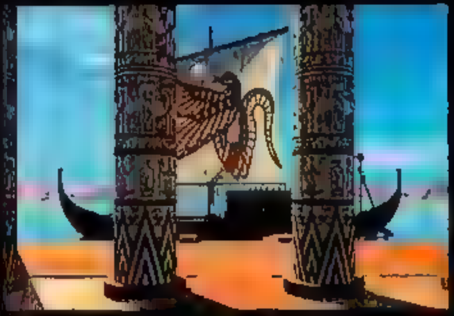


"What we saw stunned even us jaded editorial types."
– *PC Games*

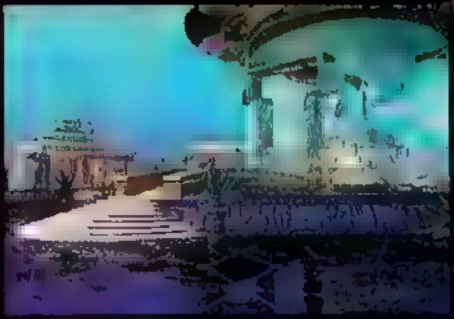
"There are a lot of gorgeous MYST-style adventures, but this is the best of them all."
– *Computer Games Strategy Plus*

"Timelapse's carefully crafted story line [illegible] a game worth completing."
– *Newsweek*

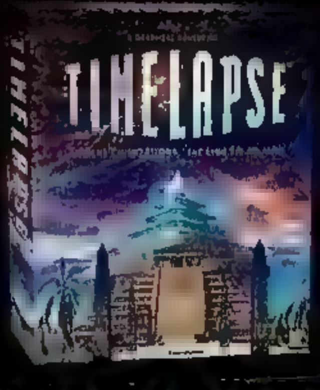
Journey through five SGI-rendered, faithfully recreated 3D environments and unravel the secrets of Easter Island, Egypt, Atlantis and the Mayan and Anasazi worlds.



Embark on a compelling, puzzle-solving adventure with stunning full-screen, photo-realistic, ray traced graphics as you travel through time and space.



Enjoy over 40 hours of challenging gameplay with multiple endings as you attempt to reach your ultimate destination...Atlantis.



A Graphical Adventure

Free demo disk
www.im.gte.com

GTE Entertainment

CIRCLE READER SERVICE #115

Outwit spies, retrieve stolen documents and change history before 90 tons of ice stops you.

"One of the best new games for fall 1996."
— Computer Gaming World

"Nothing short of awesome."
— Next Generation

"Incredibly detailed re-creation."
— Newsweek

TITANIC

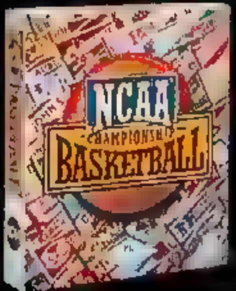
Network and modem options let you challenge your friends for season or tournament play.

Advanced artificial intelligence lets you grow players from freshman to senior year.

Extensive recruiting feature let's you rebuild your team after each season of play.

"This is as close as you can get to college hoops without putting on the uniform yourself."
— Computer Game Review

"...NCAA Championship Basketball combines arcade style 5-on-5 hoops play with a sophisticated sim of Division I coaching life."
— PC Games



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GTE Entertainment

CIRCLE READER SERVICE #344

Shadow Botting

Play DeathMatch Alone With Testy Little QUAKE Bots, Or Play QUAKE At Work With A Stealth Boss Key

by V. Long

QUAKE DeathMatches are so amazing that they're worth playing even by yourself. That's right, you can experience raucous "multiplayer" mayhem even on a lone, unconnected computer...without suffering a millisecond of Internet lag! Using ingenious Quake C mods, known as "bots," you can simulate human players on your own machine. Although they'll never fully replace live opponents, bots are quite challenging, especially if you spawn a bunch and crank up their skill level.

My current favorite is Steven Polge's Reaper bot; it's a fearsome foe that excels at "circle-strafing," particularly at SKILL 3. Simply create a C:/QUAKE/REAPER subdirectory, put the Reaper's PROGS.DAT there, and start QUAKE by typing QUAKE -GAME REAPER. Another popular bot is Cameron Newham's Eliminator, which uses "waypoints" for navigating levels with uncanny intelligence; however, it's not as tidy to install as the Reaper.

The most humorous is TangMaster's Victim bot, which runs like an innocent bystander out of VIRTUA COP. When mixed with monsters or live DeathMatch opponents, Victim bots really test your skill at selectively hitting targets. No doubt, bots add entirely new dimensions to "multiplayer" QUAKE. You can even add bots to human DeathMatches to liven up the gameplay in your usual splatter-fests.

DON'T SHOOT ME If you enable the Victim bot, innocent bystanders will always seem to get in your way, but killing them will cost you frags.

QUAKE CYA

Who says the holidays are over? With this "boss key" hack, you can QUAKE in the office with impunity whether you play solo or pummel co-workers. Plus, no QUAKE C is required here.

In Windows 95, Alt-Tab switches applications but does nothing to squelch the sounds of mayhem. Now there's a fix, courtesy of Janis "Disastry" Jagars. Here's how to use Tab to instantly toggle between silence and your selected volume level. When the boss appears, hit Tab then Alt-Tab. When the boss goes away, hit Alt-Tab then Tab. This hack also lets you quickly adjust sound volume via Page Up and quit silently via F10 then Y.

Go into the C:/QUAKE/ID1 subdirectory, and copy CONFIG.CFG as AUTOEXEC.CFG. Then use a text editor to append the following 14 lines to AUTOEXEC.CFG.

HOT BOTS Spawn a few bots to elevate the multiplayer pandemonium in DeathMatch. The bots act like human players and go for each other if you aren't around.

```
// boss-key hack
alias vol_00 "volume 0 ; alias
vol_0b vol_b ; echo Silence"
alias vol_0 "volume 0 ; alias vol_s
vol_1 ; alias vol_b vol_0 ; alias
vol_0b vol_00 ; echo Silence"
alias vol_1 "volume 0.3 ; alias
vol_s vol_2 ; alias vol_b vol_1 ;
alias vol_0b vol_00 ; echo Low
volume"
alias vol_2 "volume 0.7 ; alias
vol_s vol_3 ; alias vol_b vol_2 ;
alias vol_0b vol_00 ; echo
Medium volume"
alias vol_3 "volume 1 ; alias vol_s
vol_0 ; alias vol_b vol_3 ; alias
vol_0b vol_00 ; echo Loud"
volume            0.3
alias vol_s vol_2
alias vol_b vol_1
alias vol_0b vol_00
bind PGUP vol_s
bind TAB vol_0b
alias squit "volume 0 ; wait ; quit"
bind F10 squit
```

That's all we have this month, but stay tuned for more QUAKE goodies. Same QUAKE time. Same QUAKE page.

Check out this month's Quake goodies and files from previous months on the CD.

DIFFICULTY LEVEL EASY

A Gnarly Ride

Bike Racing With Violence And Tasteless Humor

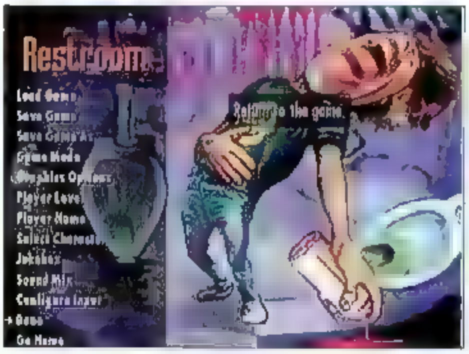
by Gordon Goble

What would you call a product that's tasteless, full of grunge and violence, but also fun? You'd call it ROAD RASH, EA's hodgepodge of disconnected (and at times morally bankrupt) ingredients thrown together to accompany what is an otherwise enjoyable motorcycle racing game. Off the track, ROAD RASH offers up mid-quality videos of drunken brawling Harley stereotypes, and cartoon stills of other intoxicated bums vomiting in dirty toilets and peeing in equally dirty urinals.

If you can dig past this dirt, however, you will find a simple, but fun, motorcycle racing game. ROAD RASH puts you in the boots of a motorcycle punk to win illegal street races. You'll have your pick from several unsavory alter-egos, such as ex-con Milwaukee Jon or rabies-infected "Rhonda the Rash," and then you're on your merry way.

First stop is the local biker hangout Der Panzer Klub, where you'll set control, graphic, and sound options and sign up for the next race. You can also schmooze with your peers, supposedly picking up track and style hints in the process. The trouble? Well, the racing's not very complex and the hints are lame, so why bother?

Price: $49.95
System Requirements: IBM-compatible Pentium 75, 16 MB RAM, 25 MB hard drive space, SVGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM drive, supports Direct Sound-compatible sound card.
# of Players: 1-8
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
Designers: Papyrus Design Group
Publisher: Electronic Arts
San Mateo, CA
(800) 245-4525
Reader Service #: 322



THIS IS COOL? This disgusting scene is typical of the fluff surrounding ROAD RASH. Most bikers are portrayed as idiots and grungy slackers.

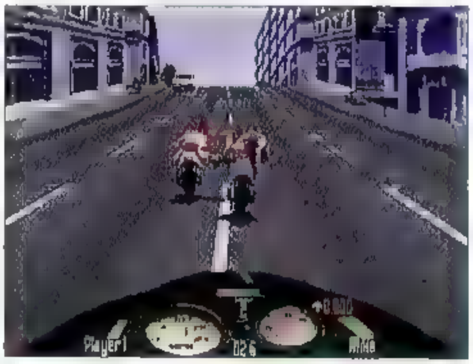
Being a newbie biker, you start with nuthin' but a stinkin' Rat Bike (as the game personalities would say). As you pick up victories and earn money, you'll want to visit Olley's Skoot-A-Rama to upgrade your wheels, moving up through various sport and superbikes. The bigger and badder the bike, the harder it is to control, but you have to do it because the competition will be getting better, too.

THRASHING YOUR FRIENDS

It takes more than a good driver on a good bike to rule this roost. You see, these scumbags play dirty, flailing away with chains, bats, boots, or just a good old-fashioned backhand as you try to pass. Naturally, you have to fight fire with fire, and if the truth be known, it's a blast whacking some poor schmuck over his noggin until he loses control in front of an oncoming vehicle.

Action occurs in a rear chase view, with an impressively appointed instrument panel across the base of the screen. The bike leans into turns and skids in fast corners, but it's basic arcade with minimal real-life handling. The big challenge is avoiding a constant barrage of obstacles (and beating the crap out of your rivals).

The tracks aren't exactly 3D, but they do run the gamut from seaside drives to congested cities to superhighways, with scenery that includes squishable photo-realistic pedestrians and all manner of transportation and structure. The most fun is playing it multiplayer.



MEAN STREETS Much of the fun consists of simple arcade racing on different tracks while trying to punch, kick, and beat your opponents off their bikes.

But a limit of five total circuits and the very simple driving model make for a questionable long-term proposition. Add in a hardware conflict between the game, Sound Blaster 16 sound cards, and Microsoft's Direct Draw that consistently kicked me back to the Win 95 desktop without warning, and ROAD RASH becomes even less intriguing. Still, ROAD RASH is fun, though it could have been a better game with a little more motorcycle flavor and a lot less tastelessness.

▸APPEAL: Young Gen Xers with a taste for two-wheeled street combat.

▸PROS: Great grungy bands, great grungy music, nice graphics, good track. The fighting on cycles can be highly entertaining.

▸CONS: Too much periphery, too little game. Disjointed feel to the product as a whole; annoying software/hardware problems.

CG RATED ★★★

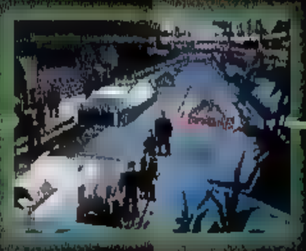
HUNT

OR BE HUNTED.

- From the co-designer of *X Wing™* & *Tie Fighter™* & the designer of the *Super Star Wars™* game trilogy
- 50 twisting, turning action-packed sub-missions rife with combat and puzzle-solving objectives
- Dramatic graphics stunningly rendered in cutting-edge "Anime"-style animation
- First person, side-scrolling action in 2 1/2-D combat environments teeming with drug lords, cyborgs and the vilest perpetrator of all
- Written by world-renowned author Orson Scott Card (*Ender's Game, Speaker for the Dead*) this intense plot-within-a-plot storyline comes alive with sizzling dialogue and continuous interactivity between characters
- High-tech crime fighting including DNA analyzation
- Cinematic soundtrack with original music and action-enhancing sound effects

It's 2095. You're Neo-Hunter Rick Gage—a human bloodhound hired to track down the killers of a powerful senator. Use your sharp wit and even sharper shooting to navigate the dangerous metropolis of future San Francisco in an action-thriller that embroils you in an underworld of corruption and greed. It's a race against time to track down the powers orchestrating the collapse of the new millennium. All before the hunter becomes the hunted.

NEO HUNTER™



CIRCLE READER SERVICE #238

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY

Off The Beaten Track

Microsoft's Muddy Mother Of Arcade Racing

by Mark Clarkson

Microsoft's game strategy seems to be to concentrate on titles that move fast and look good under Windows 95. MONSTER TRUCK MADNESS (MTM) does both, at least if you've got a fairly fast Pentium. Dropped behind the wheel of a teetering monster truck, you have to do your muddy worst on a variety of off-road tracks. MTM offers a selection of 12 trucks drawn from the real world of monster truck racing, and the names Bigfoot, Bear Foot, and Snake Bite should be familiar to anyone who's spent an evening watching 4x4s careening over heaps of crumpled Galaxy 500s on ESPN.

MTM lets you test your monster truck mettle on three types of circuits: drag, circuit, and cross-country rally. Driving the trucks is straightforward, although I couldn't set the game up to use my CH pedals or to make use of the additional buttons on my CH F-16 Combat Stick.

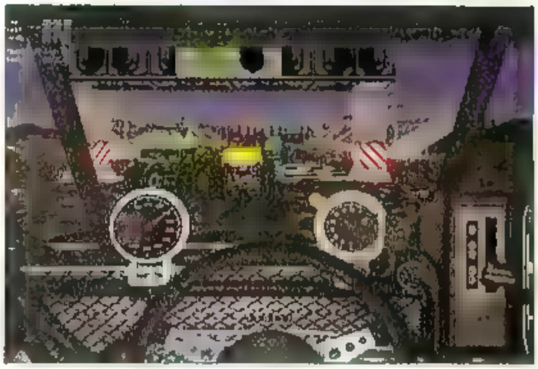
The graphics are great, especially on my 3D accelerated Diamond Stealth card (MONSTER TRUCK MADNESS uses Direct3D and can take advantage of 3D hardware acceleration). Tires leave tracks in the mud and grass, and send clouds of dust and dirt into the air.

Large game objects, such as trees and buildings, are indestructible, but you can snap other items, like cacti and road signs, into pieces by driving over them. All the right sounds are here—trucks crashing into each other, water splashing, audience cheering—but the sound quality is disappointing.

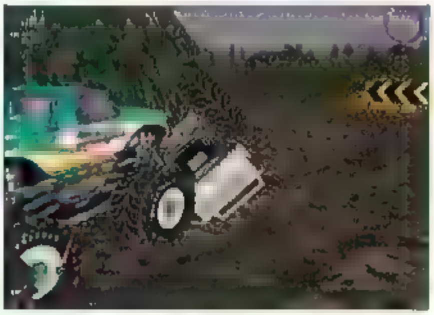
There are three different difficulty levels to choose from. On beginner, your speed is kept so low that you can take turns without tipping over, though you lack the muscle to jump over large-sized gaps. On intermediate, you can run your truck up to full speed. On the professional setting, all bets are off—the computer's trucks cut corners, take advantage of all the shortcuts, and drive to win.

There's a garage, but it offers nothing like the complexity of such hard-core racing sims as INDYCAR RACING II. You can adjust the cut of your tire tread from shallow to deep, tweak your acceleration, and choose from soft, medium, or hard suspensions. Soft suspensions damp acceleration, but also soak up the bounces better.

I did manage to test the LAN and modem play, which both worked fine. In fact, my eight-year-old daughter and I occupied a happy hour or two playing tag on our local area network—something PC off-road racers might want to try their foot pedals on. If you have the time for a few quick races, and an appreciation for arcade racers in classic console style, then fire up MTM for some good, muddy fun.



KEEP ON TRUCKIN' You can race with up to seven other human or computer players over three types of tracks, slipping and sliding across gorgeous terrain in a silly but fun arcade-style monster truck racer.



TONKA TOYS Your indestructible trucks tip, sway, bounce, and roll all over the tracks like toy trucks. You can roll several times and still drive off without a scratch. If you land on your roof, the game will just flip you right over.

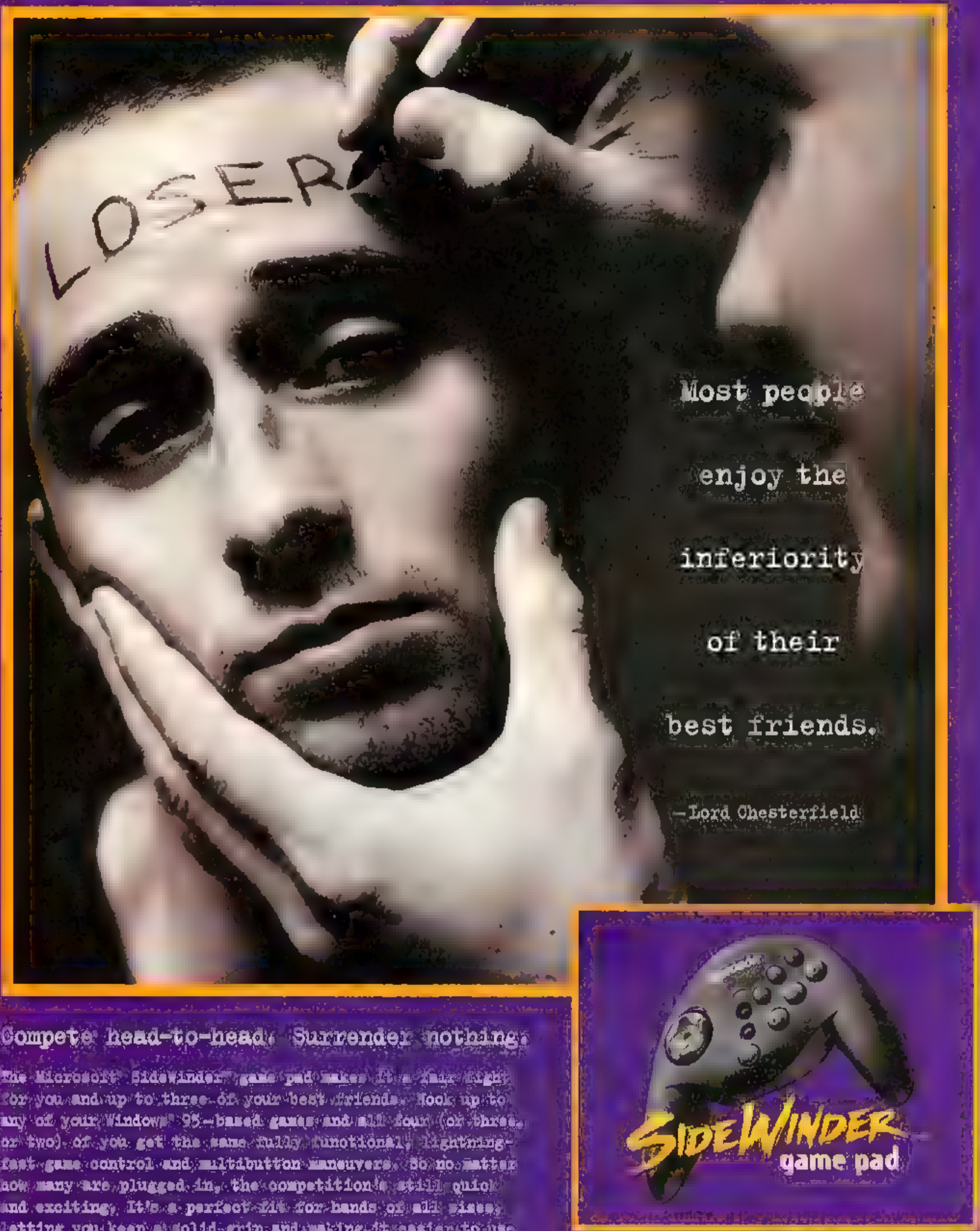
Price: $44.95
System Requirements: IBM-compatible Pentium 60, 8 MB RAM, 2x CD-ROM drive, SVGA graphics, 20 MB hard drive space, Windows 95, mouse; supports most major sound cards.
# of Players: 1-8
Protection: Key code for first installation (CD must also be in drive to play)
Designer: Terminal Reality
Publisher: Microsoft
Redmond, VA
(206) 882-8080
Reader Service #: ***323***

▸APPEAL: **MTM is for those of you who want to experience the kidney-pounding fun of monster truck racing, and who aren't expecting a serious simulation.**

▸PROS: **Great graphics, good basic fun, very easy to get into.**

▸CONS: **Limited garage tweaking, disappointing sound quality, low on sim depth.**

CG RATED ★★★


LOSER
Most people enjoy the inferiority of their best friends.
—Lord Chesterfield
SideWinder
game pad

DIFFICULTY LEVEL
EASY

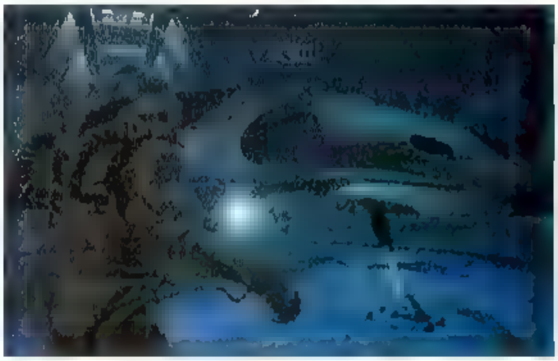
Dead In The Water

Microsoft's Shooter Deserves To Stay Underneath The Waves

by Scott A. May

You've fought aliens in space, on hostile planets, and even on city streets. Now take a deep breath and pursue them underwater in Microsoft's DEADLY TIDE, a first-person shooter that's long on atmosphere but short on just about everything else.

In the year 2500, Earth plays host to a race of alien invaders, who have quietly set up shop deep within our oceans. Until now, their exact purpose has been a mystery. Recent attacks on shipping have prompted counterstrikes by the Earth Oceans Alliance (EOA) to rid the world of this threat. Urgency is cranked up a notch when it's discovered that the aliens are slowly raising the ocean levels, with the intent of drowning their landlubbing opponents.



ENJOY THE SHOW The beautiful pre-rendered graphics and lush cut-scenes of DEADLY TIDE look almost as good as *Star Trek: TNG* or *SeaQuest*. Maybe they should do a VCR version.

As you may have guessed, you're the Earth's only hope, sent into action with the Hydra, a high-tech hydrofighter prototype. The action takes place in a variety of settings—all underwater—ranging from sunken ships and alien strongholds to craggy topographies. Gameplay consists almost entirely of deep-sea exploration, as you locate clues to defeat your foes, while constantly fending off wave after wave of attacking alien vessels.

ALL THAT GLITTERS...

DEADLY TIDE's greatest attribute is also its biggest shortcoming. All scenes are pre-rendered with gorgeously detailed 3D graphics, created by the same Hollywood team responsible for backgrounds used in *SeaQuest* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Visually, the game is stunning, with brilliant light source shading and diffused filtering. Add some ambient bubble effects and you truly feel submerged in an underwater realm.

Unfortunately, all this pre-rendering bumps the game size up to four CDs and requires constant disc access. On slower systems, this can result in display pauses and choppy animation. Luckily, you can smooth things out by selecting one of three graphic settings, with only slight degradations in overall quality.

While pre-rendered graphics offer greater detail, they severely limit your freedom of movement. With few exceptions, you have absolutely no control over the path you take. You simply trudge along a predefined path, as if pulled by an invisible tow line, rotating your HUD-based crosshairs to blast oncoming alien hordes. Disorientation is common, as you spin around to target opponents without knowing where the computer is spinning you. In other words, your role here is submissive, not assertive.

WATERLOGGED While launching Microsoft's latest Windows 95 gaming wave, DEADLY TIDE sets gameplay back several years.

And boy, is this repetitive. The five different alien ships always attack in swarms, from all sides; annihilate one wave and another appears out of thin water. And so on, *ad nauseam*. In DEADLY TIDE, if you've seen one battle, you've seen them all. Hopefully, Microsoft's next title will play more like a game and less like a tedious movie. §

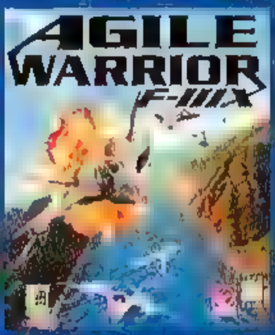
▸APPEAL: Fans of frantic, arcade-style shoot-em-ups will find plenty to keep their trigger fingers twitching.

▸PROS: Genuinely murky, claustrophobic atmosphere, lush blue-green backgrounds and ambient sound effects.

▸CONS: Combat controls are also murky, pre-rendered flight paths offer limited directional freedom, and gameplay is highly repetitious.

Price: $54.95
System Requirements: Pentium 75 or better, 8 MB RAM, 17 MB hard disk space, SVGA graphics, Windows 95, 4x CD-ROM drive, mouse; supports Win95-compatible sound cards and joysticks (Microsoft SideWinder 3D Pro recommended).
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
Designers: Rainbow Studios and TRG3
Publisher: Microsoft
Redmond, WA
(206) 882-8080
Reader Service #: 324

AS OF NOW, AIRLINE FOOD IS NO LONGER THE MOST DEADLY THING IN THE SKY.



LOOKS LIKE SALISBURY STEAK HAS FINALLY MET ITS MATCH. Introducing Agile Warrior: F-111X for Windows® 95. A game that's so intense you'll discover testosterone in places you never knew you had it. From the cockpit of one of the most advanced weapons in the sky, you'll fly numerous deadly missions while enjoying realistic explosions, blasting sound effects and the outlandishly advanced cutting-edge graphics you can only get with Windows® 95. Meanwhile, on the ground below, your arsenal of laser-guided munitions, napalm canisters, cluster bombs, 20mm cannons and air-to-ground missiles will insure you wreak havoc on anything and everything in your path. All in unlimited access, on-the-fly 3-D environments. Agile Warrior: F-111X.

We love to destroy.

And it shows.

INTRODUCING AGILE WARRIOR: F-111X FOR WINDOWS® 95.

www.vie.com

CIRCLE READER SERVICE #[illegible]

DIFFICULTY LEVEL
EASY

Go-Kart, Go!

Manic Karts Mostly Lives Up To Its Name

by Gordon Goble

You might not have guessed it from the subject matter, but Virgin's Manic Karts is actually a part sim–part arcade look at the bum-on-the-ground world of go-karting, as seen through a collection of fantasy courses that simply could not exist in the real world. It's an electrifying experience, if only for the raw speed of the game and the staggering handling of the machinery, but it isn't the "sim" the box cover would have you believe.

KART DÉJÀ VU

Wait a second. Didn't we hear this all before? Why yes, way back when GT Interactive released SuperKarts in early 1995. It turns out Manic is simply a marginally modified revision of the old GT product.

Fortunately, SuperKarts was a real kick in the pants, and so is this follow-up. Is it enough of an upgrade to entice SuperKarts owners back to their wallets? Not exactly. Aside from some new tracks and minor tweaking, the game feels very much the same. But for newcomers to the fast track, Manic is worth a look.

In SuperKarts tradition, Manic Karts looks to be designed by two separate camps: one that pushed for a straight-ahead sim, and one for a wacky arcade game. And though there'll undoubtedly be arguments that it should've gone this way or that, the end result is a nifty little marriage between the two.

GLOBAL GO-KART

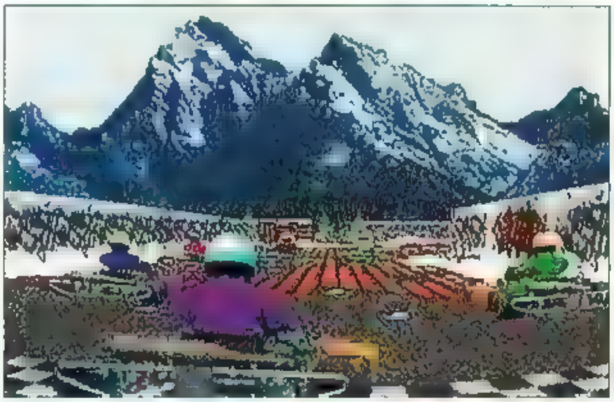
As a Manic Karter, your task is to compete with seven other drivers in a single race or a full season of events held at various locations around the globe. From your behind-the-kart chase perspective, you'll be bumping, blocking, cutting corners, and avoiding the omnipresent walls and obstacles on the road to victory. The view is intense, literally overflowing with graphics, not to mention a ton of time, speed, and positional information.

As you win races and earn prize money, it's best to spend your dough on performance enhancements such as cutting-edge tire compounds, engine "tuning," and larger fuel tanks, so you can spend more time racing and less time in the pseudo-pits. As the season progresses, you'll notice the winning drivers (stats are displayed at the culmination of each event) slowly building better karts, often through very different strategies.

Manic Karts is an intriguing game, because as arcade-like as the circuits look, with cute interactive elements like water, sand, traffic barriers and cones, and even bouncing beach balls, there's some real-life driving required. Most notably, you've got to adhere to acknowledged racing lines—smooth the corners by setting up a wide berth before cutting in tight and naturally drifting back out onto the exit. And, to further that real-life resemblance, your competitors are actually there to win the damn thing, not roll over like losers.

Sometimes you'll be immersed in a series of Doom-like corridors where it's all you can do to keep out of the dead ends. There are plenty of environments to drive through. You may find yourself sloshing through waterways and snow banks, or driving on log or dirt roads. Manic Karts is a single-planed "flat" game, so sadly you won't be speeding over hills and dales or down into valleys.

SuperKarts veterans should note that those bouncing power-ups, cash bags, and oil slicks populating the original have not made it here. Also, you won't be going from Easy to Pro anymore; now you'll graduate from a 50cc machine up to a full-body 250cc powerhouse. But, geez, whatever happened to progressive damage and smoking engines? And what's with that annoying digi-music, anyway? In the end, though, Manic Karts is the next best thing to finding SuperKarts in the discount bin.



KART BLANCHE Manic Karts, though just a repackaging of the old SuperKarts, is still a fun go-kart racing game with a good mix of arcade speed and sim handling.

Price: $34.95
System Requirements: IBM-compatible 486 DX 33, 8 MB RAM, 1 MB hard drive space, DOS 6.x or higher, VGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM drive; supports Sound Blaster—compatible sound cards, joystick, joypad, Thrustmaster T1 Steering Wheel, and VR headset.
# of Players: 1-4 (IPX network)
Protection: None
Designers: Manic Media
Publisher: Virgin Interactive
Irvine, CA
(800) 874-4607
Reader Service #: 325

APPEAL: Anyone who feels an arcade racing game shouldn't necessarily mean a bad driving model.

PROS: Responsiveness to bum—just like the real thing. Lots of interactive graphics, no more Super Mario-like power-ups.

CONS: "Flat" tracks, only a mildly updated reworking of the year-old SuperKarts. And it's still only go-kart racing.

DIFFICULTY LEVEL
ADVANCED

I Don't Want My MTV!

If God Lives Underwater, He'll Swim Away From This Unhip Scene

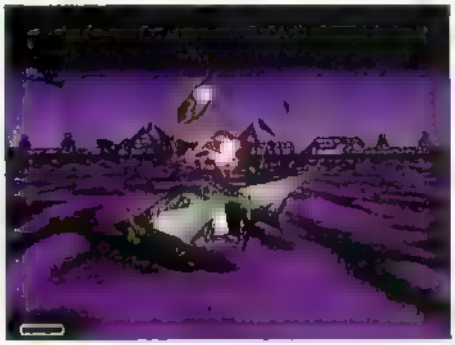
by Robert Coffey

SLAMSCAPE really strives to be hip. From the soundtrack and videos by alternative rockers God Lives Underwater, to the online manual that tries too hard to master Gen X lingo, SLAMSCAPE unabashedly tries to win over the skateboard and Green Day crowd. Unfortunately for MTV and Viacom, they've come up with a game about as cool and ill-conceived as a Bay City Rollers reunion

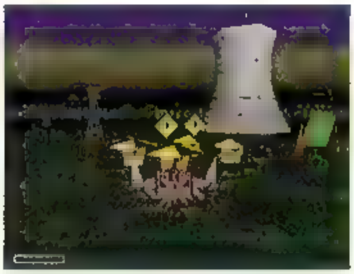
ISN'T IT IRONIC?

You and 16 other victims have become the subjects of a hideous, potentially brain-melting experiment. Now you must pilot a Slamjet across four different levels to save yourself and your fellow guinea pigs, freeing their trapped psyches, which have taken the form of glowing id-orbs. Not the most compelling premise behind a game, but then I don't think QUAKE or DUKE NUKEM are going to be winning any Peabody Awards this year either.

Price: $54.95
System Requirements: Pentium 90, Windows 95, 8 MB RAM, 2 MB RAM local bus graphics, 2x CD-ROM drive, supports DirectSound-compatible sound cards
Protection: None (CD-ROM must be in drive)
Designer: Fred Allen, Todd Squires, Todd Papaleo
Publisher: Viacom New Media
New York, NY
(800) 469-2539
Reader Service #: 326



FUN, YEAH SLAMSCAPE's four levels feature incredibly strong enemies, which you counter with weak weapons, sloppy controls, and no save feature within a level.



JUMPING JACKS A lot of time in SLAMSCAPE is spent jumping for power-ups like these torps and the fastblast booster way up on that cooling tower.

There are only four levels plus a bonus level, each with four id-orbs. Every level is built around a theme executed with a sense of irony so clumsy it makes Alanis Morrisette seem a master of nuance in comparison. Some of the threats are level-specific, like the killer beach umbrellas flying around in the Endless Bummer level; others, like the Shreddy Bears (Slamjet-tearing stuffed monsters), simply change appearance to blend in with the surroundings. It's an attempt at humor that generally falls flat.

SLAMSCAPE is chock-full of fast-paced, jet-driven action, with your Slamjet speeding, jumping, banging, and especially skidding around the different arenas. A joystick does an adequate job of steering the Slamjet, but control is difficult simply due to the way the vehicle handles. Your Slamjet spins and slides uncontrollably with every collision, turn, or attempted stop, making split-second timing and precision maneuvers nearly impossible.

Overall, gameplay is pretty shallow. There are only four weapons available, and only two of those pack any kind of punch. The ineffectiveness and scarcity of weapons forces you to spend a lot of time avoiding adversaries instead of taking them on.

You can only avoid them for so long until they seek you out, and that's where SLAMSCAPE really starts getting aggravating. While your weapons just push enemies around, they can kill you easily. Power nodes, which normally shield your Slamjet, are always being stolen by a constant parade of node snaggers. Without any decent weapons or shields, death is a condition you'd better get used to.

IT'S NOT WORTHY

The final nail in the coffin for SLAMSCAPE is the lack of a save game. Granted, there is a psuedo–save game feature that registers your progress between each level, but you can't save your game while playing through a level. For instance, after a few hours of play I'd finally captured three id-orbs, but real life called. I wanted to save so I could pick up where I left off, but I couldn't. I'd have to start over. The worst example was having the game crash just as I rescued the final orb after more than an hour of trying. So if you're looking for some fun action, look elsewhere.

APPEAL: Arcade gamers with lots of free time and Gandhi-like patience.

PROS: God Lives Underwater music videos without the annoyance of MTV personality Kennedy.

CONS: Forced humor; high difficulty and inability to save game make for irritating, repetitive gameplay that leaves gamers little room for error or enjoyment.

CG RATED

Vicious, interplanetary species have invaded.
And our only defense is you.
SCORCHED PLANET™
The fate of mankind rests upon your shoulders and you only have two weapons:
a tank that morphs into a fighter plane and your own intelligence.
Lucky you have that morphing thing.

SCORCHED PLANET

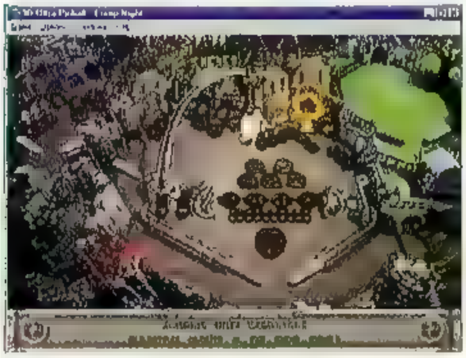
DIFFICULTY LEVEL EASY

Multiball Fright

CREEP NIGHT Will Give Your Flipper Fingers The Creepy Crawlies

by Charlotte Panther

Pinball players, prepare to be spooked. CREEP NIGHT, the latest escapade in Sierra's 3D ULTRA PINBALL series, is filled with a host of ghoulish characters just waiting to slink out of the shadows and pounce upon their next victim: you. Garrulous ghouls are popping up everywhere, and all you have to defend yourself against the monsters are a couple of flippers and a few silver balls



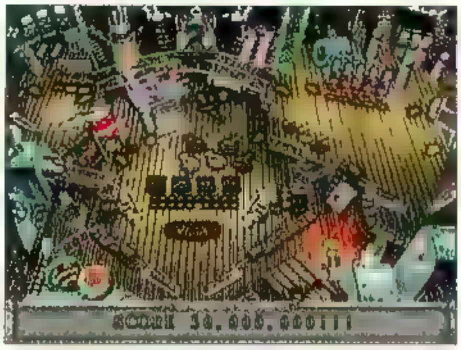
WRATHFUL WRAITH Avoid the specter and aim for the Castle gate in one of CREEP NIGHT's three-themed pinball tables.

GOBLIN GOODIES

CREEP NIGHT lets you test your pinball skills in any one of three scary settings—the Castle, Tower, or Dungeon—and shoot for points, much like any other pinball game. Alternatively, you can try to complete *all* of the challenges on each of the three tables, acquiring keys leading to each succeeding level. Conquer each table, and you may return to the Castle to prove your heroic powers in one final challenge against evil.

Admittedly, the plotline is a bit thin (as most puzzle game "back stories" are). Still, on every table, you must accomplish at least five challenges to move on. And while the scenarios in each setting are similar, dozens of weird and wonderful characters save them from becoming monotonous.

In the Castle, for example, a mysterious wraith will try to steal your ball. You'll knock out zombies, chase ghastly goblins through mysterious passageways, and attempt to fire balls into a volatile vortex. In the Tower, a giant squid tempts you to play catch with him, while rats dare you to follow them into dark corners. The Dungeon is riddled with spiders scuttling around the floors, while skeletons hide in every cupboard. There's even a ghostly apparition waiting to gobble up your ball.



BEAUTY AND THE BEAST Avoiding nasties like this table's multi-armed squid is made that much more fun by CREEP NIGHT's great graphics and spooky ambiant sounds.

Each table offers a variety of ways to score points and advance your journey. Players can accumulate Premium Points by hitting targets scattered around the board. Collect 20, and become eligible for Goblin Goodies: extra balls, bonus points, passage between tables, and multiballs. It's your one-stop Undead shop!

APPARITION EYE-CANDY

Attractive hi-res graphics are enhanced by an abundance of ghostly animation. Spooky background music, teamed with a constant clamoring of ghastly voices offering advice, contribute beautifully to the overall ambiance of the game. Text at the bottom of the screen reflects what the gruesome voices are saying, and indicates your score.

The game offers various game preferences, including two skill levels, a choice of three or five balls per game; a highlighting option that points out important targets on the table; three gravity choices, affecting how the ball will hit a target; and support for up to four players.

If your machine meets the minimum system requirements only, expect some speed deficiency and clunkiness, particularly if you're playing with a double-speed CD-ROM drive. And be prepared for the fact that, as with all Sierra games of late, you'll receive no documentation.

These moans aside, CREEP NIGHT is an entertaining game with plenty of scope for replayability. Beginners will have fun practicing on any one of the three tables, while those well versed in the art of pinball will still find the harder level suitably challenging. So, go ahead and play…if you dare.

Price: $44.95
System Requirements: IBM-compatible 486-33 MHz (Pentium 75 or better recommended), 8 MB RAM (16 MB recommended), 2 MB hard drive space (25 MB recommended), 640x480 graphics with 256 colors, 2x CD-ROM (4x recommended); supports Windows-compatible sound cards with DAC
# of Players: 1-4
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
Publisher: Sierra
Bellevue, WA
(800) 757-7707
Reader Service #: 327

▸APPEAL: For both beginning and experienced pinball fans wanting some ghoulish fun with their flipper action.

▸PROS: Great selection of challenges, brisk multi-ball play, and table-warping options; nightmarish animation and a gruesome cast of characters.

▸CONS: Some clunkiness when playing with minimum system requirements; online help manual only—no documentation included with game. Needs more than three tables.

CG RATED ★★★★

Online Puzzle Contests

Yoyodyne and Riddler.com Are On The Cutting Edge Of Mainstream Internet Entertainment

YOU DON'T KNOW JACK, Berkeley Systems' super-successful game show parody, is a terrific party game. The problem is that in order to appreciate this fact you need to have a party. Everyone at the party must then gather around one screen and lay hands on a keyboard. And whoever wins only wins points, rather than actual prizes. On the whole, a not entirely satisfying state of affairs.

All of these problems would be solved if instead of playing against two players in your home, you played against two players in their homes, and did so in a public competition that offered real rewards.

An online version of YOU DON'T KNOW JACK appears to be in development, judging by Berkeley's latest magazine ads, and I am told that at least one major special effects house has been commissioned to create an online JACK clone. This probably means that by next summer four or five such games will be open for business on the Web. But you don't have to wait in the meantime. Two companies have been offering online game shows and contests for some time now, and they'll be glad to satisfy your craving when it strikes. What's more, they offer prizes that will definitely pique your interest, such as weekend getaways, tickets to shows, cash, etc.

RIDDLE ME THIS, RIDDLE ME THAT

Interactive Imagination's Riddler.com site (http://www.riddler.com) looks like a cross between a toy chest and a department store. There are lots of games, each sporting a slick logo and cartoon-like graphics, and there are lots of prizes, each with a value in "riddlets" and "CAPS," the currencies of the realm. Entering a game means giving up some of your store of riddlets, and winning a game replenishes your account. Everyone gets 2,500 riddlets just for signing up at the site, and free riddlets are available for those who lose it all.

CONNIVING CONUNDRUM, BATMAN! Sometimes Riddler.com gets too clever for its own good, but it is a slick, energetic Web site.

Collect riddlets and you can trade them in for CAPS, which in turn can be redeemed for particular prizes. Each CAP carries a sponsor's name and logo, informing you of whose largesse you should be grateful for. AT&T CAPS can be redeemed for a nine-day trip to Alaska — if you have something like 600,000 of them. Microsoft CAPS buy you a Kodak camera. It's a little like selling *Grit* (for those of you old enough to remember): you earn points toward the purchase of nifty prizes, all the while knowing that the best you can realistically hope to collect is a baseball cap or T-shirt.

No matter. The fun here isn't in the actual winning of prizes (for one thing, the explanation of how CAPS and riddlets operate is so abstruse that Immanuel Kant couldn't have untangled it), it's in the knowing that prizes exist to be won, and in the playing of the games themselves. The stakes feel high and the opponents are real human beings whom you don't know. If that's not enough to waken a sense of competition in you, nothing is.

The two main types of game Riddler offers are trivia games and crossword puzzle games. The latter were still being tested as of this writing; sometimes they work and sometimes they don't. When they do, the idea is to fill letters into a crossword puzzle grid and then submit your answers to win CAPS. There is a one-player version (*Gridlock*) that is rather tame, and there is a three-player version (*Checkered Flag*) in which you race two opponents (selected at random from the crowd that has chosen to visit the site when you want to play) to fill in answers before they do. Having a fast modem helps, as does typing quickly.

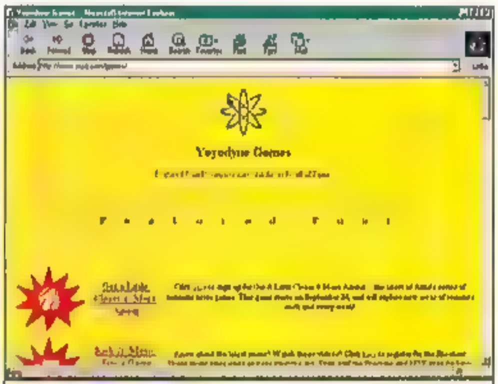
> “For the mass market, Internet game shows represent the future of online entertainment.”

One-player trivia games include *Mental Floss*, in which you must answer either five, seven, or nine questions out of ten correctly in categories such as *Unreal Estate* or *Name That Toon*, and *Brainmail*, which is similar except that the questions come to you by e-mail. (You still have to visit the Web site to type in your answers.) The questions struck me as awfully simple—in ten rounds or so, only one was a stumper—but they're not boring. Things you might need to know: Pearl Harbor was bombed in 1941, C.S. Lewis' story about corresponding with the devil is called *The Screwtape Letters*, and there once was a cartoon version of *Rambo*.

The crowning jewel on the site, though, is the JACK-like three-player trivia game *King of the Hill*. You wait in a chat room until there are three of you to pit against one another, then race with the others to type in answers to questions about everything from pop culture to geography. Answers the first time I played included *The Man Who Knew Too Much* and "Welcome Back, Kotter;" the second time, "Tina Turner" and "the Gobi Desert." Between rounds you get to talk to your fellow contestants, of which there generally seem to be an ample supply. (At seven A.M. on a Tuesday, I found someone who wrote, "I'm supposed to be doing a phylogeny chart for zoology." How often does he wander by the site? "Whenever insomnia grabs me...often." Has he ever won anything? "Nope.")

PYNCH HITTER

Many of the same game types are available from Yoyodyne (http://www.yoyo.com), a game site named after the slightly sinister toy company in Thomas Pynchon's novels. The difference is that most of Yoyodyne's games are played by e-mail rather than on the Web. Exceptions: the type of Web-based scavenger hunt Riddler calls *Bloodhound* here is called *Car Chase*, and Yoyodyne's less-interactive *Crossword Madness* predated either of Riddler's crossword games. However, Yoyodyne's real strength lies in its sponsored e-mail trivia contests.



AND NOW, A NET BLURB FROM OUR SPONSOR From Arrid Extra Dry to obscure grunge bands from MTV, you'll find a variety of games on Yoyodyne from your favorite vendor—with less obtrusive ads than on Riddler.com.

At any one time, Yoyodyne has several such contests running. Today, for instance, you could play *Get A Little Closer 4*, sponsored by Arrid deodorant, or *The AT&T E-mail Trivia Game*, sponsored by guess who. Questions range from simple ("What prince has to kiss Snow White?") to obscure ("In this 1926 movie, John Barrymore planted an average of one kiss every 53 seconds for nearly three hours"), generally getting harder as you progress in a round of play. Questions arrive by e-mail once a week and you have a deadline for sending your answers in. The contestant with the most correct answers at the final round wins. When tie breakers are needed, tie breakers are used.

One obvious advantage that Yoyodyne has over Riddler is that Yoyodyne's games are available to people who don't have access to the Web—there are still twice as many people in the world who have an Internet e-mail address as there are who use the Web, and more than twice as many people use e-mail than use the sort of cutting-edge Web browser most Riddler games require. Another is that Yoyodyne's prize system is more comprehensible, making the prizes appear to be more attainable. (And they're good prizes: weekend getaways, CD collections, tickets to shows, cash.)

More generally, Yoyodyne's tone is more appealing than Riddler's. Riddler was launched by a bunch of recent Ivy League grads, and it shows in the site's blustery, smug stabs at humor. Yoyodyne is the brainchild of game design veteran Seth Godin (designer behind the TELARIUM adventure games of yore), and a seasoned, confident professionalism shines through. Passing through the Riddler site is like being jostled in a hipster bar; hearing from Yoyodyne is like hearing from an old friend.

The energy Riddler exudes is not to be discounted, though, and they certainly deserve kudos for pushing the envelope. Social games like *King of the Hill* give people a reason to come back to the Web every day, something the Web has pretty much lacked until now. Talk all you want about fancy sims and multiplayer adventure games—having visited Riddler, I am convinced that, at least for the mass market, Internet game shows represent the future of online entertainment.

CG TIPS!

▶ Spelling counts. There may occasionally be some room for error, but you shouldn't assume there is.

▶ If in a multiplayer game you're guessing between two choices that you conclude have equal odds of being correct, choose the shorter one, since at least that way you increase your odds of being the first to "buzz in."

▶ Don't bother trying *Klondike*, Riddler's "no pressure" game for members and non-members. It's just a version of Windows SOLITAIRE, and there's no reason to pay phone charges by the minute and Internet access provider fees by the hour to play solitaire.

▶ When Riddler's huge ad pages start downloading, just scroll to the bottom of the screen and click on the not-yet-loaded link centered at the bottom. This way you can get to the games without having to wait through 20 ads for the "AT&T College Network" in one day.

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #94

DIFFICULTY LEVEL
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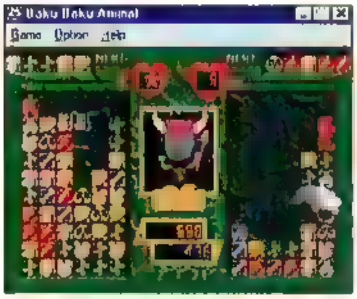
Baku By Popular Demand

TETRIS's Spirit Resurfaces In A Puzzle Game That Will Drive You Bananas

by Charlotte Panther

When BAKU BAKU hit the CGW office in its original Sega Saturn format, CGW staffers went wild. Deadlines were missed, spouses were neglected, and children were ignored as our addicted gamers played BAKU tournaments until the early hours of the morning. When we heard the news that Sega was bringing out a PC version, we were filled with a mixture of delight and fear: delight that we could now each enjoy this wonderful puzzle in the comfort of our own desktop; fear that the addiction might cost us our jobs, break up our marriages—in short, destroy our lives.



LET'S GO SHOPPING Arranging your food blocks requires quick thinking and strategic planning, especially against a live, aggressive human opponent

FEED ME!

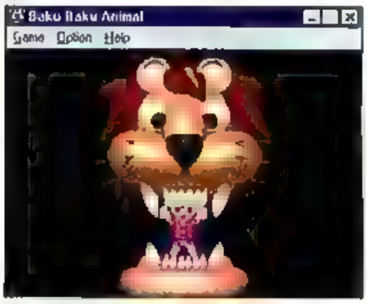
BAKU BAKU is competitive TETRIS with a unique spin. An animal-obsessed princess has you trying out for the esteemed role of zookeeper, so that you are forced to frantically match up hordes of clamoring pets—mice, rabbits, dogs, monkeys, and pandas—with their favorite chow, represented by appropriate color groups. As the blocks drop into the playing field, the aim is to align as many similar food blocks as possible, vertically or horizontally, before dropping in the appropriate ravenous animal for a feast.

For each block you remove, the block above will drop down to replace it. The skill lies in setting up a chain reaction. If you plan ahead (keeping a close eye on the top of the screen to see what kind of blocks will drop next) you can strategically place your pets to ensure that as you remove blocks from the board, the animals above will drop right into a spread of their favorite munchies.

Not only does this help you keep your playing field empty, it also presents a nasty surprise for your opponent. Clear three or more blocks at a time, and your rival will be bombarded in return; set off a couple of chain reactions, and pretty soon you'll bury your opponent. But watch out: the number at the top of the screen indicates how many blocks your opponent will let loose on you. Fill up your own playing field and you'll meet an untimely end in the jaws of a lion.

If all this sounds simple, it is. But unlike most of the puzzle games inevitably compared to TETRIS, BAKU BAKU is the real deal, because it uses its simplicity to lure you into game after game after game…

ORBITING SATURN



TIME TO FLOSS ALREADY? BAKU may seem simple, but lose a match, and it's an unwelcome dinner date with this ferocious feline.

If you're experiencing BAKU BAKU for the first time on the PC, you'll find it an amusing and addictive puzzle game, provided you have the necessary hardware to run it properly. We tried the PC version on a number of different machines with varying results. On some machines (particularly 486s), playing in full-screen mode resulted in diminished speed and highly pixelated graphics. It's hard to believe, but to get an experience comparable to the Sega Saturn original version, we had to play BAKU BAKU on a Pentium 133 with 16 MB of RAM and a 6x CD ROM. On anything less than, say, a Pentium 100, you are likely to find the game an underwhelming experience.

Despite these porting problems, however, BAKU BAKU remains a challenging puzzle and an enjoyable distraction that stretches from five minutes during your lunch hour to "just one more game" well after midnight.

APPEAL: Tetris fans looking for a new spin on a classic game.

PROS: Deceptively challenging and addictive gameplay; easy learning curve; unique, amusing characters; the true successor to TETRIS.

CONS: This port isn't quite up to the Saturn version and may leave you puzzled as to the loss of speed and grainy graphics on any but the top PC machines.

CG RATED ★★★★

Price: $29.99
System Requirements: 486 DX2-66 (Pentium 133 or better recommended), Windows 95, 8 MB RAM, 6 MB hard drive space, SVGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM (4x recommended), supports Sound Blaster 16 and compatible sound cards.
# of Players: 1-2
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
Publisher: Sega
Redwood City, CA
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Reader Service #: 328

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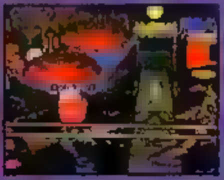

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #58

Lost For Words?

Scrabble Leaps To The Net With A Daunting Computer Opponent

by Charlotte Panther

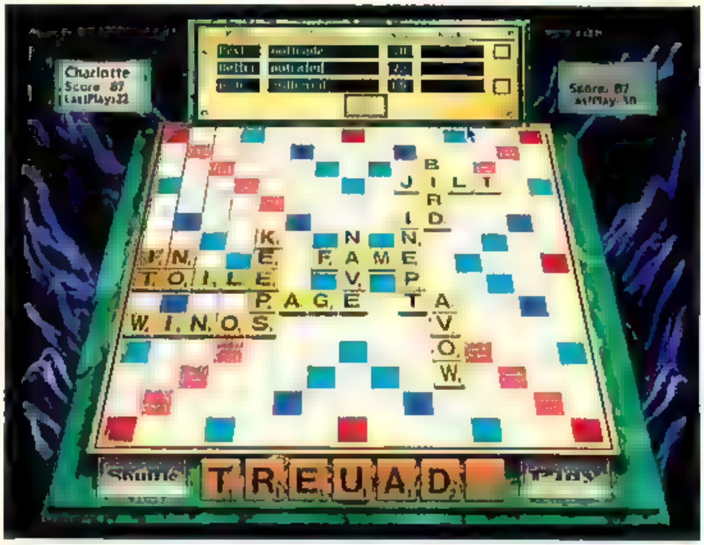
Fancy yourself as a *Scrabble* champ? Think you could hold your own among world-class players? You may be able to whip your granny, or even best a few of your colleagues at work, but it's doubtful you'll find Maven, SCRABBLE's computer opponent, any sort of pushover. For anyone who's been hiding under a stone for the last 60 years, *Scrabble* is a crossword game for up to four people. The idea is to strategically place interconnecting words on the board, in order to achieve the highest possible score. This CD-ROM version maintains the essence of the original *Scrabble*, but what else does this new multimedia version have to offer?

> **YEAH, IT'S AMBROUZOWITZ, BUT I SPELL IT S.M.I.T.H.**
>
> —*George Carlin*

The first and foremost advantage of playing computer SCRABBLE is that you have a tireless opponent available whenever you want to play. Maven plays at five levels ranging from Novice to Champion. I consider myself a fairly good *Scrabble* player and I found myself able to beat the computer at Advanced level, but at Expert level that Maven was pretty darn sneaky.

That's not to say that you don't have some advantages. You can call upon certain forces to "assist" you while playing against the mighty Maven. Pull-down menus allow you to access such features as the Word Lister, a function that will list, say, all the Q words that don't require a U, or all the JQXZ words; the Vowel Dump function introduces you to a list of vowel-intensive words.

And then there's the "hint" (or more aptly, the "cheat") function, which reveals a list of the three best moves you could make, while arrows on the board indicate where to place each word. This is a great tool for those who are looking to improve their game. It led me to some useful words that I've managed to utilize in subsequent matches. And it comes in really handy during those moments towards the end of the game, when you're scrambling to use up those last few letters. Amazingly, there are 94 two-letter words that you can officially use in the game.



IF YOU CAN'T BEAT 'EM Then cheat 'em: SCRABBLE's Hint feature points out your next best move.

Other options allow you to set time limits, request penalties for incorrect words, control the speed at which Maven plays, choose different backdrops, and select background music (toggle it off—the music is pretty annoying when you're trying to concentrate). You can also play by modem or network, although this isn't quite the Internet-playable revelation that Hasbro's MONOPOLY was a year ago.

My main complaint is with the dictionary: whoever compiled it obviously has a pretty broad definition of the English language. If you don't usually play by the official *Scrabble* dictionary, it's likely you'll be frustrated by Maven's choice of words, some of which are pretty farfetched.

Altogether, though, Hasbro Interactive has done an excellent job of bringing *Scrabble* to the computer. The user-friendly interface, which replicates the original *Scrabble* board extremely well, should appeal to hard-core *Scrabble* players and learners alike. Modem, Internet, and network play add to the game's strength. And SCRABBLE certainly offers replayability. According to Maven's creator, percentages show that at Champion level, even world-class players lose to the computer more times than they win. So keep practicing!

Price: $39.99
System Requirements: 486/66, Windows 3.1 or better, 8 MB RAM, 5 MB available hard drive space, SVGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM drive, mouse; 9600 baud or better modem for modem play.
# of Players: 1-4 (modem/network)
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
Publisher: Hasbro Interactive
Beverly, MA
(508) 921-3700
Reader Service #: 329

▸APPEAL: For anyone wanting a challenging word game.

▸PROS: It's really *Scrabble*, helped by multiplayer options and a tough computer opponent; great graphics.

▸CONS: The sound is annoying at best, and even the Oxford Dictionary folks might have trouble with how the Queen's English is stretched here.

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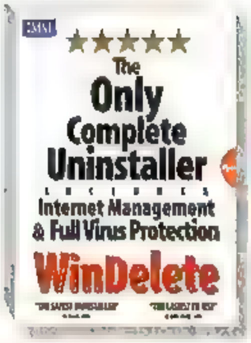

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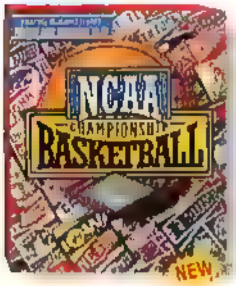

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The Impact Rookie

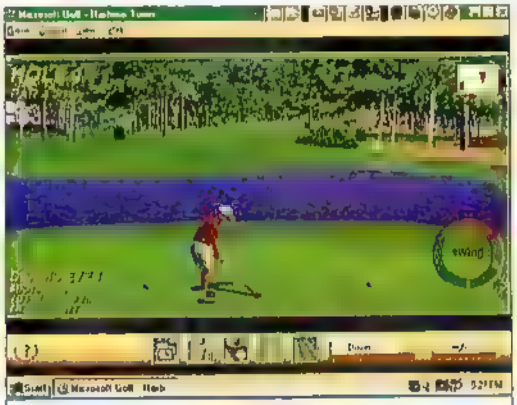
Will Gates' Power Moves Dominate The PC Sports World?

> **"Welcome, Microsoft, and beware. Sports gamers are the toughest crowd there is."**

After every season the major sports honor their best new player as Rookie of the Year. This prestigious award signifies that the recipient hit the ground running, making the biggest splash among his fellow new guys. There's nothing more exciting, in fact, than watching a talented freshman take an unsuspecting league by storm. Such players go by a new buzzword these days: impact rookie. Of course, art imitates life, so sports gaming now has its own impact rookie. He's big, tough, and comes from a highly competitive Washington program. Redmond, Washington, that is—Microsoft HQ. Yep, the smiling, happy people that brought Windows 95 to your desktop have jumped into sports sims with both cleats. So what do you want to play today?

BASKETBILL

Now, I know what some of you are thinking. For all their experience pushing GUIs, Web browsers, and word processors, can Microsoft really have an impact on the sports gaming scene? C'mon. Can a steamroller have an impact on an ant hill? Can Junior Seau have an impact on a halfback's dental work? Any market Microsoft jumps into is going to feel the heat. MS just brings too much financial and distribution clout to the table not to be taken seriously. But will Gates and Company's foray into gaming be a long, ball-control drive or a quick kick, a lark to fill the time until Windows 97 ships? After all, who remembers another corporate monolith that shall remain nameless (but whose initials are I-B-M) and its short-lived entry into the sports market with 1995's rendition of PRO LEAGUE FOOTBALL?

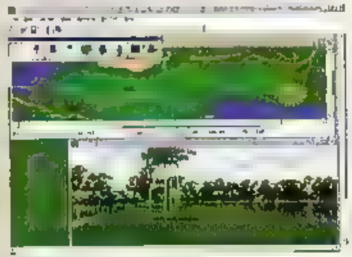


LET'S SWING MS GOLF 3 will initially ship with just two courses—Banff Springs and Harbour Town

Microsoft's opening tap in its sports gaming line is NBA FULL COURT PRESS, a good-looking, smooth-playing Windows 95 product that is turning heads despite a few significant flaws (see review this issue). FULL COURT PRESS has captured enough of the NBA experience to ensure that it can run the floor with its only real competition, EA's NBA LIVE series. FCP uses attractive motion-captured player graphics and the lively patter of Seattle Supersonics announcer Kevin Calabro to put the user into the action. Regular readers know that I'm skeptical of games using play-by-play voiceovers, but

ON DECK

- The latest word from Accolade on LEGENDS 97 FOOTBALL is this: either they're going to ship it by the Super Bowl, or they're going to hang onto it until the start of next season. They intimated that they're leaning in the latter direction.
- Speaking of Accolade, the company is hard at work on JACK NICKLAUS 4, the new version of their acclaimed golf series, for a first-quarter release. Along with multiplayer LAN, modem, and Internet support, the game will also include a new course architect that will let industrious and creative types design their own 18-hole courses. One nice touch we just heard about is that Jack Nicklaus' own designers have created a set of custom greens and sand traps for you to include in your courses.



DENNIS McCAULEY

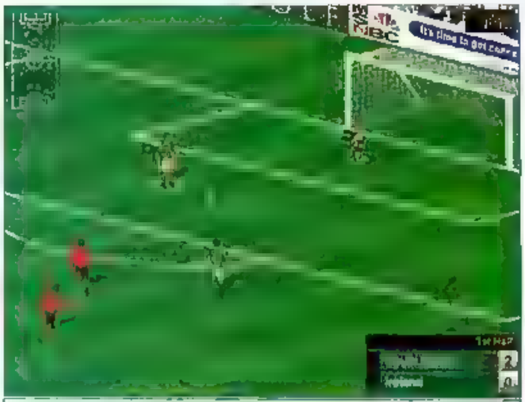
when Calabro comes out with, "They were on him like the villagers after Karloff," even I have to crack up.

So what's driving Microsoft's entry into sports gaming? The same thing that brings strange bedfellows like Jerry Jones and Deion Sanders together: money. Lots of it. Games make up 50 percent of the consumer software market, and sports titles claim their share of that rather large pie. With the September release of Full Court Press, followed closely by MS Soccer and MS Golf 3.0, it's clear that Microsoft is staking their claim on territory dominated by the likes of Sierra, Electronic Arts, and Accolade. In fact, Ed Fries, general manager of MS' Games Group, mentioned EA as one company that has particularly impressed him for their long history of successful sports titles.

Fries, a Microsoft veteran who worked his way through college writing code for Atari 8000s, is no stranger to the gaming scene. I spoke with him recently about Microsoft's PC sports kickoff, and while he couldn't reveal future plans, he did indicate that this fall's trio of sports titles is just the tip of the iceberg. "You can expect us to focus on the major sports," he said, measuring his words carefully. So does that translate to MS Baseball come the spring? Fries remained mum, but, hey, we can only hope. After 1996's run of highly touted but ultimately disappointing baseball sims, knowing that the likes of Microsoft are breathing down their necks could motivate the other game companies to finally get it right. On the other hand, adding an MS football entry next fall would bulk up an already overcrowded pigskin lineup.

CG TIPS!

▸ Having trouble finding worthy human opponents for NHL 97, NBA Live, and your other EA Sports titles? The company now has their Multiplayer Matchup Service up and running on their Web site at www.ea.com/matchup.html. The service lets you add your name to the database and search by area code and game for modem and net opponents.



LEG WORK Microsoft's next foray into the sporting world will be soccer, which has a near-identical interface to Full Court Press

STAT ME UP

With their arrival on the sports gaming scene, Microsoft's focus becomes a critical issue for gamers. Will MS use its spreadsheet expertise to corner the market on statistical accuracy, or will they shoot mainly for action, graphics, and excitement? The answer probably lies somewhere in between. Fries indicated the primary objective was to make MS games fun to play in order to appeal to the broadest possible audience, while at the same time keeping them as realistic as possible.

It requires only a few run-throughs to see that Full Court Press comes close to fulfilling Fries' expectations. It's fun, loaded with NBA flavor, and reasonably realistic. The pre-release copy of MS Soccer that I saw was rather less impressive than Full Court Press. The interface seemed nearly identical to FCP's, but the flavor wasn't nearly as robust. While MS Soccer features realistic coaching strategy and a lineup of user-customizable international teams, my early prediction is that with FIFA 97, EA's grasp on the soccer gaming crown remains safe—at least for this year.

In addition to the two new games, MS Golf, the dean of Microsoft sports games, is teeing off with a new version to complete Gates' three-pronged attack on the sports gaming scene. Golf 3.0 features improved graphics; course fly-bys, match, skins, and team best-ball play; as well as a user-friendly golf tutor to help perfect your swing. Offered with only two courses, Banff Springs and Harbour Town, Golf 3.0 faces stiff competition from the likes of Links LS, as well as the upcoming VR Golf, Front Page Sports: Golf, and Jack Nicklaus 4.

DOMINATE ME

If you hadn't noticed, all of Microsoft's sports releases—all their gaming releases, in fact—are Win 95 products. Surprised? Don't be. It's clear that MS is banking on providing you with both your gaming platform and the games to play there as well. Maybe even the controller, too, since its new Sidewinder gamepad is priced favorably ($45) against competing products. What's crazy is that they may just pull it off.

While the quality of their initial wave of sports titles is uneven, they've provided something to satisfy a variety of gaming tastes, and their price points are extremely competitive, with most titles available on the street for around $40. Ed Fries also noted that by taking full advantage of Win 95's dial-up networking, all MS sports titles would offer Internet play.

So what does all this mean for you, the sports gamer? While some cynics may view Microsoft's foray into sports gaming with disdain, the specter of the competition they provide may give some developers a long overdue wake-up call. Game companies will now realize that they must build their sports titles better and cheaper than in years past to compete with Team Gates.

To Microsoft, then, welcome—and beware. Sports gamers are the toughest crowd there is. Be good to them, and they'll reward you with customer loyalty and word-of-net recommendations. On the other hand, leave them high and dry, with poorly designed games and buggy code, and they'll be on you like the villagers after Karloff.

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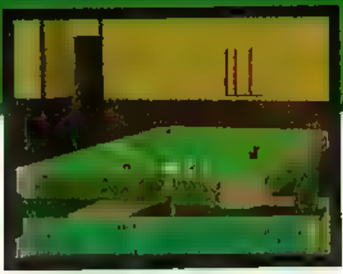

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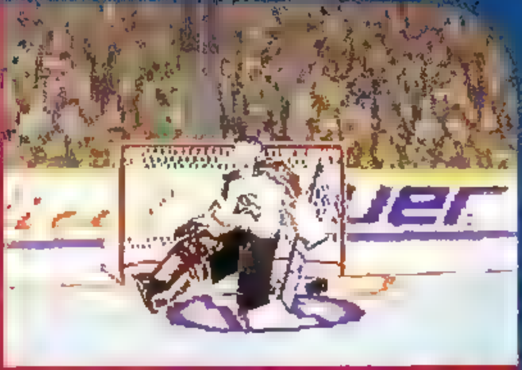
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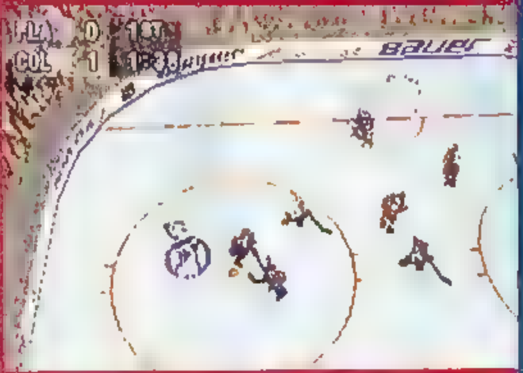
FLA 0
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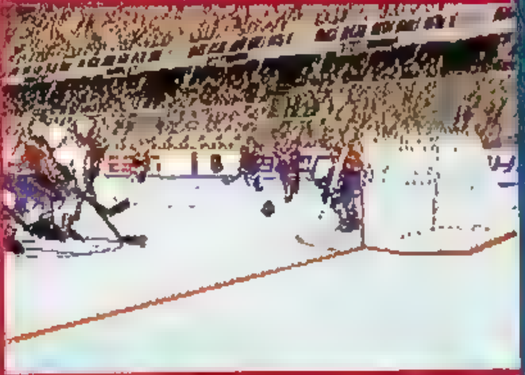
bauer

BAUER



PlayStation
NHL POWERPLAY '96

★★ **REVIEW • JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL 97**

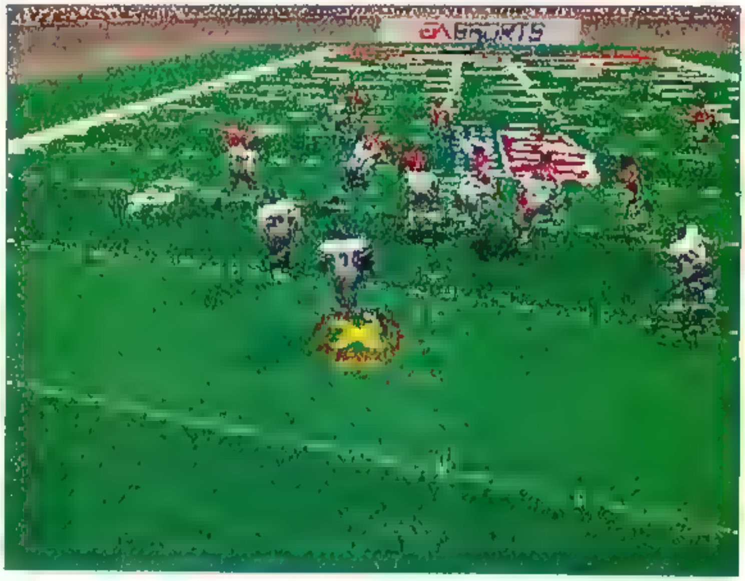
DIFFICULTY LEVEL EASY

4th And Never

Now Past Its Prime, Madden Football Should Consider Retirement

by Terry Coleman

John Madden was a coach's coach. He lacked the cerebral countenance of Tom Landry, the Mt. Rushmore jaw of Don Shula, or the hurricane-proof hair of Jimmy Johnson. But this great, big man was larger than life, whether he was berating officials for a missed call, or telling all-world possession receiver Fred Biletnikoff to smear on some banned sticky substance. At 50, Madden still looked like he could strap on a helmet and teach his defensive lineman a few tricks. But after winning a Super Bowl in 1977, he grew tired of the NFL's commercialism, of free agency, and probably of Al Davis' meddling as well. So Madden went into broadcast journalism, where he reinvented the genre, showing that you could have personality and precise knowledge of the game.



FANTASY FOOTBALL Madden 97's arcade-oriented emphasis results in football action at its most unrealistic.

HEY, I MADE A GAME!

It was inevitable that this personality would find its way into a game. While John Madden Football debuted on a number of platforms, it found a home on the Sega Genesis, where it almost single-handedly launched the 16-bit platform. In its day, John Madden football was even more of a phenomenon than NBA Live is today. But this action king rested on its laurels, as champions often do, and watched as its best designers and artists went elsewhere via free agency. And subsequent versions have used Madden as little more than a figurehead, with Madden 97 being the worst of the bunch.

The game starts off impressively enough, as the camera angle languidly pans over a historic stadium, and the sonorous, professional tones of Pat Summerall send chills up your spine as he sets the action. Leslie Visser updates you on whether Jim Kelly's hangnail will keep him out of today's game, and of course there's Madden: "What a great hit! He just went up and boom! Just nailed him! Look at that grass sticking out of his helmet; this is real football!" Um, John, aren't we playing on artificial turf today?

Much of the commentary is inappropriate. This is bound to happen with prerecorded sound bites, although games such as ABC Monday Night Football don't have this problem. But the questionable commentary will be the least of your worries.

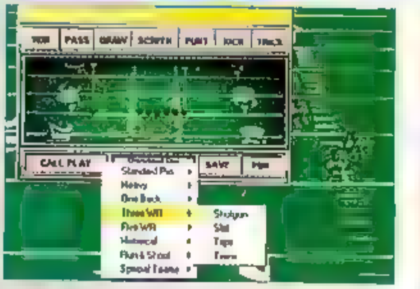
REAL FANTASY FOOTBALL

All action-oriented sports games—even good ones like NBA

Price: $59.95
System Requirements: Pentium 60 or better, MS-DOS 5 or higher (Win 95 supported, but not very well), 8 MB RAM, 40 MB hard drive space, 1 MB Vesa-compatible SVGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM drive, mouse; supports Sound Blaster and compatible sound cards.
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
# of Players: 1-2 (LAN, IPX, modem)
Designer: Stormfront Studios
Publisher: Electronic Arts
San Mateo, CA 94403
(415) 571-7171
Reader Service #: 330

The Other Teams

Once upon a time, the Madden franchise was the only game in town. Now, it's no match for the animation of Front Page Football Pro 97 (left), the clean look and robust interface of ABC Monday Night Football (right), or the gameplay of either.



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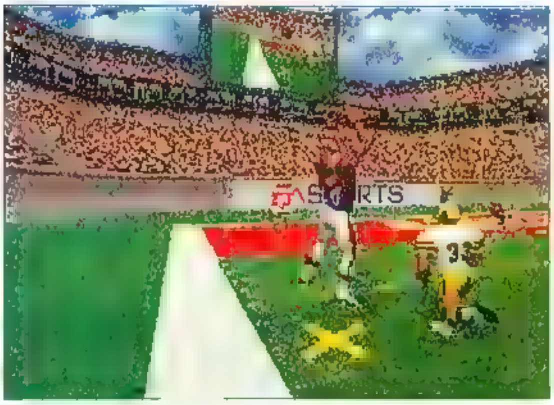
intel inside PENTIUM PRO PROCESSOR

Live—overemphasize offense, based on the theory that it's more fun to score than play defense. When Madden Football was in its prime, you could overlook the fact that every game had scores like 41-38, because it still felt like football. Now, however, they've "simplified the learning curve" so much that any knowledge you have about football means nothing; the game comes down to how quick your trigger finger is, and little else. There's no need to read defenses, as in Front Page Sports Football Pro. You can't design and save your own plays, as in nearly every other football game. The audible system lets you set up to four different plays for offense and defense, but it's way behind the elegant, robust audibles of ABC Monday Night Football.

When you get in trouble on offense, the best thing to do is to throw the ball deep. If you don't catch the ball outright, the defensive player more often than not pops the ball up, rather than batting the pass down to the ground. And in the ensuing struggle between the defensive and offensive players, it's almost always the latter who gets the reception. Interceptions are low, touchdowns are high.

When I put Deion Sanders or Rod Woodson on the opposition's best receiver, I figure I'll get at least a standoff—except maybe against Jerry Rice. But when third- and even fourth-string receivers get 10 and 12 catches (sometimes in a single half!) against two of the best cornerbacks who ever strapped on shoulder pads, you know you've crossed over into never-never land. Madden Football didn't use to be like this; if anything, the defense was too tough. Now, pushing the button at anywhere near the "right time" renders even the "Mad Dog Blitz" toothless, regardless of the offensive formation you choose, or the quality of the personnel you have on the field. This is football?

The player ratings—usually a Madden Football strength—are confusing at best. Dan Marino, probably the gimpiest great QB since Namath, routinely runs for 50 to 60 yards in a game. Some linemen are fast, but when 300-pound defensive tackles catch running backs like Barry Sanders from behind after a 40-yard chase, something is terribly wrong.



HAIL MARY PASS When in doubt, throw the bomb. Regardless of who's covering, the receiver wins all the close ones.

OUT OF CONTROL

If you try looking through the manual for some answers, you may get even more confused. You see, according to EA Sports, gamepads are really "joysticks," which may come as some surprise to those who enjoy simulations. EA's "joystick gender" confusion, if you will, may have something to do with their poor gamepad support, which is squirrelly at best. If you finally manage to get your gamepad calibrated, you are likely to lose control every time you take a timeout, make a player substitution, or access almost any other menu. And playing an action football game via mouse and keyboard—that's a 15-yard penalty, coach.

Madden 97 doesn't have career leagues like Front Page Football Pro; the multiplayer options don't work half as well as ABC Monday Night Football; even the running game feels less like football than Unnecessary Roughness 96. So why would anyone want this game? It's hard to believe that EA spent two years designing something that's so out of date. If this is the best they can do, perhaps it's time that they retired the franchise, rather than insulting the many Madden Football fans, not to mention coach Madden himself. ❡

10 Most Annoying Problems With Madden Football 97

1. The game has several different playbooks, but you can't make up and save your own plays.
2. We get Football 101 from Madden, rather than tips on how to play the game.
3. If you have one of the new Cyrix chips, Madden 97 thinks it's a 486, and refuses to let you play the game.
4. Cheesy sound—the 16-bit console music sounded better years ago. Moreover, unless you have your sound card drivers in your autoexec.bat or config.sys files, Madden's sound setup routine can't find your hardware.
5. Even with the patch, the game locks up constantly in Win 95 (the Win 95 logo is prominently displayed on the box). EA's solution is to tell you to run the game in DOS!
6. Trying to play live over a modem is an exercise in frustration. Win 95 Direct Play might have helped, but see above.
7. The PlayStation version is better, even though EA spent over two years on Madden 97 for the PC. Most—not all—of the features available *now* in the PlayStation version are promised for PC Madden 98!
8. Defensive AI is weak, and the computer compensates by making improbable tackles, often illegally from out-of-bounds.
9. A typical game has journeymen running backs getting 300 yards, and second-string QBs throwing for 500 or more yards.
10. It's disheartening to block a field goal and hear the announcer call out, "It's good!"

APPEAL: **For those who must have every football game released, or who have to have their Madden fix regardless of the consequences.**

PROS: **Simple learning curve; voices of Pat Summerall, Leslie Visser, and John Madden; decent graphics.**

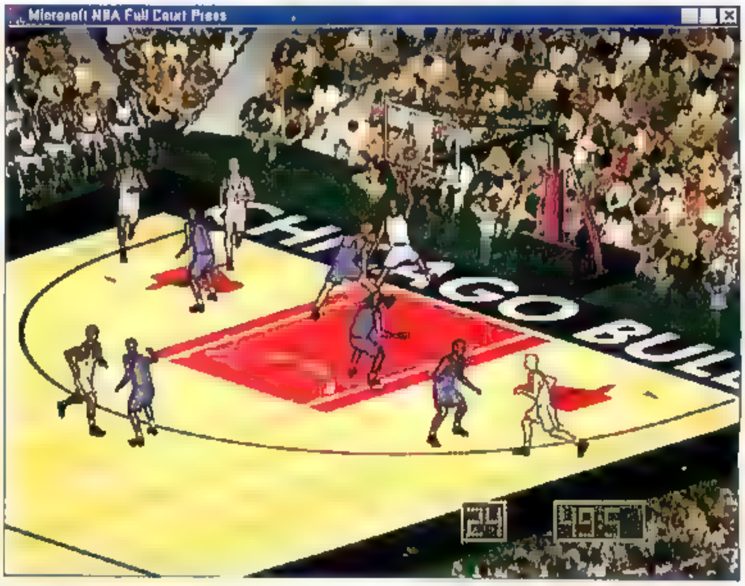
CONS: **Multiplayer problems; weak gamepad support; poor AI; limited gameplay compared to earlier Maddens. A sad decline for a once-great franchise.**

DIFFICULTY LEVEL
EASY
INTERMEDIATE
HARD

MicroShow Time

Microsoft Shoots And Scores With Action Hoops Game

by Scott A. May



HANG TIME Authentic play attributes translate into signature moves on the court. Here the Bulls' Scottie Pippin takes flight for an easy score.

Playing basketball on a personal computer is a lot like going on a blind date: you never know what to expect. They either look good or have a great personality, but rarely both. If it's a coaching sim, there's often little or no actual gameplay. If it's a fast-action arcade shoot-out, intelligence is usually benched in favor of graphic pizzazz. Imagine having the best of both worlds in a single game. What a concept.

EA Sports made the first real strides towards this goal with their excellent NBA LIVE series. Now Microsoft, of all companies, steals the rebound with NBA FULL COURT PRESS, a one-size-fits-all basketball title that doesn't exactly shatter the backboard, but scores big points for trying.

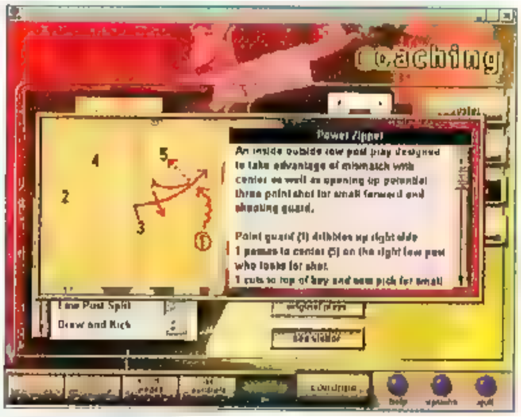
Price. $44.95
System Requirements: 486DX 66 or better, Windows 95, 8 MB RAM (16 MB recommended), 20 MB hard disk space, SVGA display, 2x CD-ROM drive or faster, mouse (gamepad or joystick recommended), Win 95—compatible sound cards, 14.4 Kbps modem for remote play, network card for LAN play
# of Players: 1 to 4
Protection: CD key
Designer: Beam Software
Publisher: Microsoft Corp.
Redmond, WA
(206) 882-8080
Reader Service #: 331

Designed for Windows 95 by Australian designers Beam Software, the game offers full-court, five-on-five action, featuring current rosters from all 29 NBA teams. Four play modes are available, including single game, season, playoffs, and practice. Up to four people can compete via modem or network link, while as many as 10 players can get in on the action using the game's built-in Internet link.

LIFE OF RILEY

Since we've already divided the genre into two (often conflicting) viewpoints, let's examine the game as a coaching simulation, where it really shines. Your first pre-game stop is the Team Editor. Here you review the league ranking for your favorite team, rated in overall, offensive, and defensive performance as well as rebounds and steals. Editing the team roster allow you to compare and replace players from the entire NBA pool. One-on-one player comparisons are extremely detailed, revealing potential match-ups in 28 categories, from points per game to which college they attended. Use this to restructure an existing organization, or create up to four fantasy Dream Teams, sporting names like The Impact, Titans, Thunder, or Barracudas.

The Player Editor is another important tool for fantasy drafts and team tweaking. Here you can modify player names, numbers, and—that all-important attribute—hairstyle. More importantly, this section lets you view and adjust 25 ratings for each player, including shooting range and ability, jumping, steals, fouls, speed, strength, and fatigue. Coupled with the game's three basic skill settings—rookie, veteran, and all-star—this gives you tremendous control of the game's overall difficulty and player handicapping. Because rating values can range from 1 to 99, this also ensures long-term challenge and replayability. Between



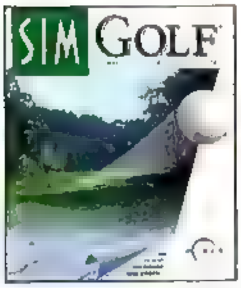
An inside outside low post play designed to take advantage of mismatch with center as well as opening up potential three point shot for small forward and shooting guard.

Point guard (1) dribbles up right side
1 passes to center (5) on the right low post who looks for shot.
1 cuts to top of key and sets pick for small

CRIB SHEETS Make sure to scout your opponents, then view diagrams and descriptive notes to take advantage of mismatches. Then add the play to your top-five list of favorites.

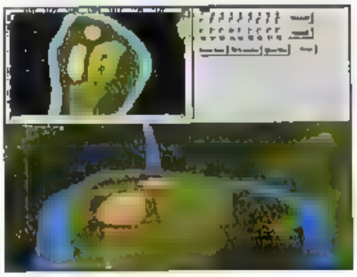
TIRED OF THE SAME OLD LINKS?

CHANGE COURSE.

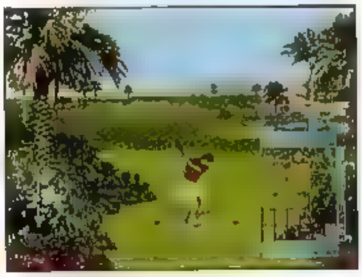


THEN CHANGE IT AGAIN. AND AGAIN. SimGolf™–with the new Course Architect™–gives you the power to create endless courses, as heartbreaking or handicap-friendly as you like. Go ahead, dig yourself new fairways, bunkers and lakes. Choose from hundreds of objects to make one-of-a-kind courses. (Think Sahara-size sandtraps. And watery golf ball graves.) Video tips from legendary course architect Robert Trent Jones, Jr. help you turn your blueprints into greens. You can even play—or customize—two Jones masterpieces, Rancho La Quinta™ and The Prince Course. Then tee off on your new links. Or round up a foursome to play your custom course on the Internet. SimGolf. It's the ultimate 18 holes (some assembly required).

SIMGOLF. COMPETE ON COURSES YOU CREATE.



Use the powerful Course Architect to customize courses. Make them flat or hilly, place holes and hazards, and it's tee time.



Once you've designed your ideal course, tee off for high-stakes skins, stroke or match play.

MAXIS

CIRCLE READER SERVICE #76

games you can indulge in player trades. Like most sports titles, though, trades are only meaningful or realistically competitive when conducted between knowledgeable human coaches.

In-game coaching decisions are also abundant, including drag-and-drop substitutions, opponent match-ups, and pop-up displays of each player's current stats and fatigue/injury levels. Here you can also fine-tune your coaching strategies, such as offensive and defensive styles (automatic, aggressive, normal, or conservative), substitution method (automatic or manual), and defensive pressure (automatic, high, low, or normal).

Last, but far from least, is the playbook selection menu, featuring 98 fully diagrammed offensive plays, culled from the repertoires of real NBA coaches. This aspect of the game is especially well done. Double-clicking on a play diagram opens a window with detailed descriptions of what the play is intended to accomplish and each step of its execution. If nothing else, this feature should prove to be an invaluable tool for anyone who desires to learn more about the game and its tactics. Too bad more sports games aren't this instructive. Each team can fashion a top-five list of special plays—open to constant revision—which are implemented during the game by pressing the corresponding number key. If no play is called, one is randomly selected from the current list. Unfortunately, there's no provision for actually editing the playbook or creating your own routines.

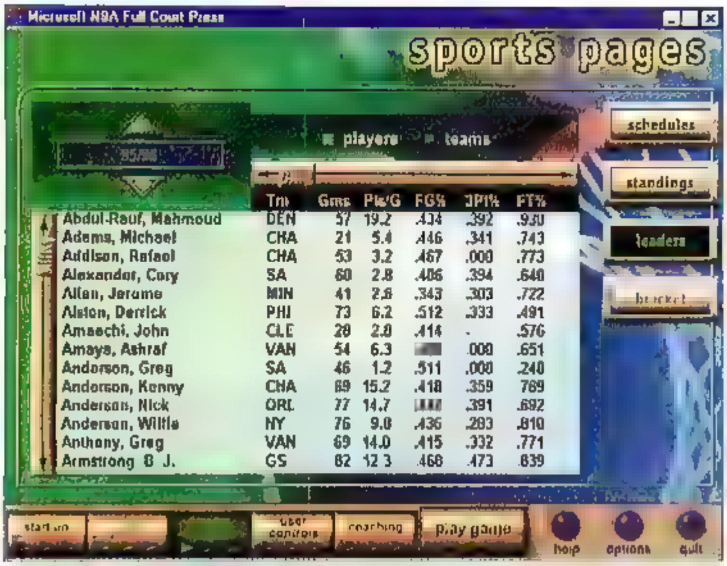
WE GOT SKILLS

Season play can be set for 32, 56, or 82 games, with user-defined playoff rounds. Manage one or more teams by highlighting its logo, then take to the court or have the computer simulate the outcome. You can also go straight to the playoffs, creating your own playoff brackets for both the eastern and western conferences.

Players hit the court in a rich environment of the usual bells and whistles: reactive crowd noise, realistically modeled team courts, and play-by-play commentary by Kevin Calabro, voice of the Seattle Supersonics. Player animations are very good, reportedly based on more than 250 motion-captured moves. Many of the animations are extraordinarily detailed, involving subtle wrist flips, elbow bends, and hip gyrations. Overall, the players all have the same generic look about them—much like department store mannequins—rendered in solid 3D and outlined in black. Watch for the Bulls' Dennis Rodman, whose hair changes color when least expected.

Player controllers include mouse, keyboard, and joystick, although a four-button gamepad is definitely preferred. Not surprisingly, Microsoft's new Sidewinder gamepad performed the best of all controllers tested, with the Gravis GamePad coming in a close second. Keys and buttons can be configured to your preference, controlling actions such as passes, fakes, shots, rebounds, blocks, and steals. You can let the computer automatically switch the player under your control, switch

Fore!



	Tm	Gms	Pts/G	FG%	3P%	FT%
Abdul-Rauf, Mahmoud	DEN	57	19.2	.434	.392	.930
Adams, Michael	CHA	21	5.4	.446	.341	.743
Addison, Rafael	CHA	53	3.2	.467	.000	.773
Alexander, Cory	SA	60	2.8	.406	.394	.640
Allen, Jerome	MIN	41	2.6	.343	.303	.722
Alston, Derrick	PHI	73	6.2	.512	.333	.491
Amaechi, John	CLE	28	2.0	.414	-	.576
Amaya, Ashraf	VAN	54	6.3	[illegible]	.000	.651
Anderson, Greg	SA	46	1.2	.511	.000	.240
Anderson, Kenny	CHA	69	15.2	.418	.359	.769
Anderson, Nick	ORL	77	14.7	[illegible]	.391	.692
Anderson, Willie	NY	76	9.0	.436	.283	.810
Anthony, Greg	VAN	69	14.0	.415	.332	.771
Armstrong, B. J.	GS	82	12.3	.468	.473	.839

FULL PRESSED COURT Check the Sports Pages for copious stats, schedules, and standings during season play.

manually, or focus your efforts entirely on the center, forward, or guard positions.

Game speed flows reasonably well on average systems, but it can really turn herky-jerky on slow machines. Effective solutions include turning off nonessential details like crowd noise, music, commentary, and the scoreboard display. If that doesn't smooth player animations, four screen resolutions are available, ranging from a slightly fuzzy 640x480 to an ultra-crisp 1280x1024. You can also run the game from a window rather than full-screen, which should speed things up.

Like most games of this type, on-court action is a matter of hits and misses. Players are sometimes hesitant in their reactions, causing shots to go unchallenged and loose balls to dribble out of bounds while everyone stands idly by. This is most frustrating during rebounds, often the ball bounces several times on the court before someone picks it up. There are also little annoyances, like the poorly defined net graphics or having to retrieve your own free throws. The refs are invisible—sometimes literally, as they tend to miss obvious defensive penalties. For the record, you also have control over officiating style and specific penalty calls.

The built-in Web interface links players to a common Internet site where you can join a game in progress or host a new contest. The connection works, but despite repeated tries during the course of this review, the online roster remained empty. Like other Web-ready games, it's a great idea as long as you're not the only one showing interest. Multiplayer modem games tested perfectly, however, with only slight transmission pauses at 28.8 Kbps.

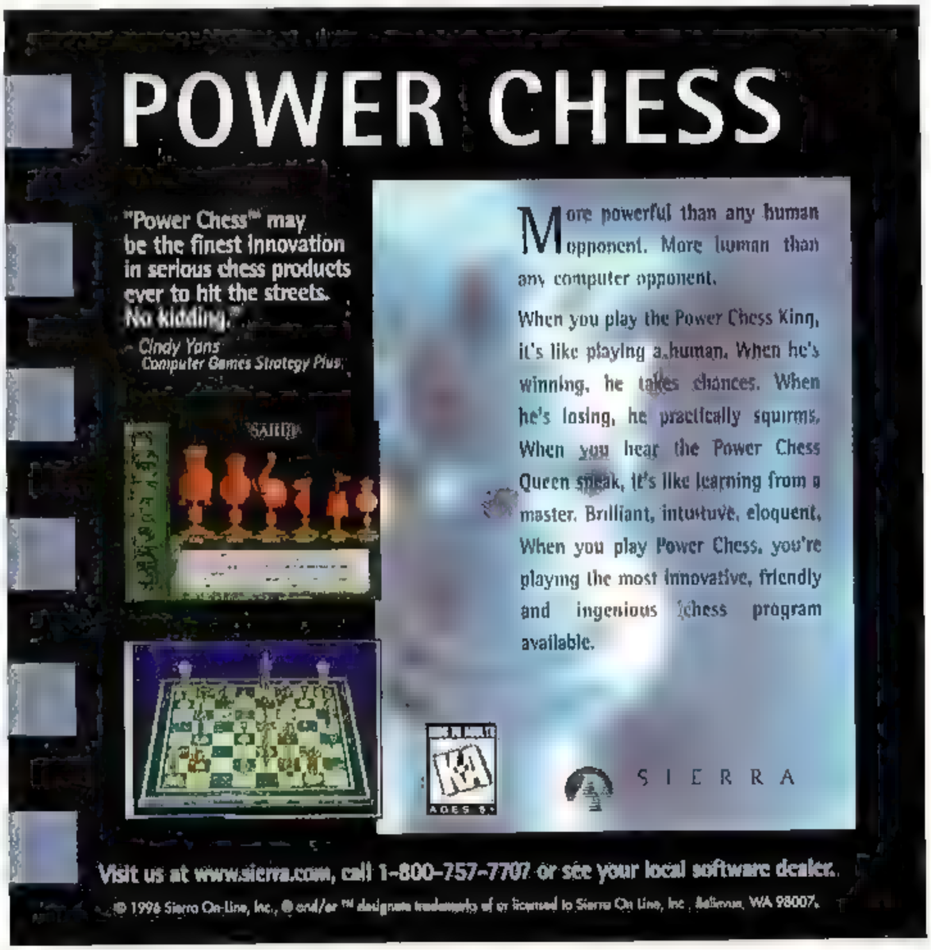
Overall, despite some intrinsic arcade foibles, NBA FULL COURT PRESS is very impressive. Coaching enthusiasts will definitely enjoy the arena-full of options, which are so intelligently presented that even die-hard arcade fans may be tempted to switch courts.

▸APPEAL: Win 95 gamers longing for a combination of arcade-style roundball action and detailed coaching sim.

▸PROS: Options galore! Impressive playbook selection, stat breakdowns, and team management; Web, LAN, and modem play a big plus.

▸CONS: You'll need a beefy system to enjoy full performance. Control is a bit sloppy, and there's no playbook editor. The AI—especially for player trades—could be better.

CG RATED ★★★



- Brian Fargo Profiled
- The Future of Gaming
- Sneak Peek at StarFleet Academy

By Gamers, For Gamers.

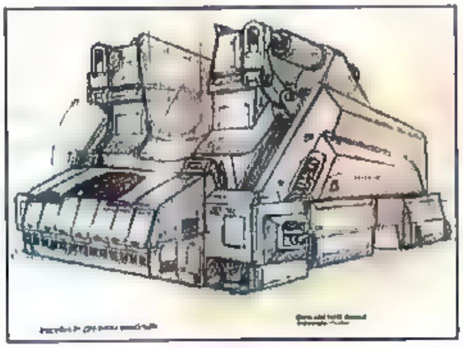
Like many of the pioneering computer game companies, Interplay Productions began with one man coding in his bedroom. Brian Fargo loved to play computer games and he loved to build them, whether they were the early text-based games or the groundbreaking games that came later. Brian's viewpoint has always been,

"How is this a better experience for the gamer?"

Q: Brian, in your opinion, what are some of Interplay's breakthrough products?
Fargo: I liked The Bard's Tale series. We gave gamers a first-person perspective they hadn't had before, even if it was in that little upper left-hand corner window, and we gave them three-point animation instead of static monsters. I liked Wasteland for its elaborate map, its skill-based design and NPC (non-player character) code. Wasteland was also the first game to offer moral dilemmas. With BattleChess, we were trying to create an animated version comparable to one of those Franklin Mint collectors sets. With Castles, we wanted to combine some of the dynamic, planning aspects of say a SimCity with a sense of medieval role-playing. Descent tapped into the 3D revolution. And with Starfleet Academy, M.A.X., and Fallout we're continuing to stay on the "bleeding edge." I'm proud of all of those.

Q: Interplay has always used a lot of licensed properties? Why?
Fargo: I use one guideline in licensing products: "Is the world rich enough that I want to play in it?" I wanted to do a Lord of the Rings game from the time I first read it We made Neuromancer because it was a world that we thought computer gamers could relate to. Of course, our prize licensed properties would have to be the original Star Trek and AD&D licenses.

Q: Why do you think your Star Trek games have been so successful when others have gotten mixed results with the license?
Fargo: From the beginning, with our Star Trek games we focused purely on the game elements first, then took consideration for the license. After fleshing out the inner workings, we moved to simulate not just the universe but also our interpretations of it. Gamers feel like they're right beside Kirk and Spock. When it became practical, we started using voice-overs from the original cast. We knew gamers wanted to feel like they were right there with the Enterprise crew. Now, with Star Trek. Starfleet Academy, we're pushing the 3D and special effects technology, but the story and gameplay still came first.



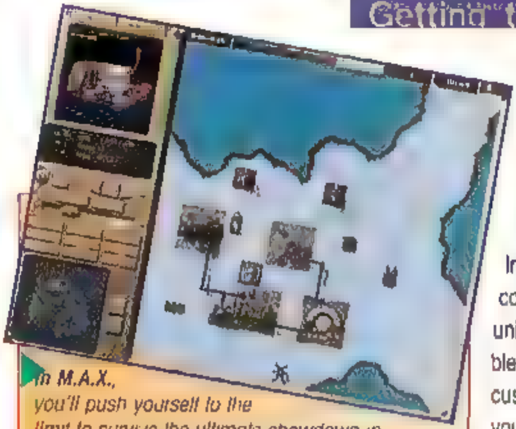
Q: Why do you emphasize "By Gamers. For Gamers" as a motto?
Fargo: If we don't want to play a game, we don't publish it. To build an Interplay game, you have to convince me and a host of other dedicated gamers that we want to play it. We started the MacPlay line because we had Mac gamers who felt that no one was taking the time to port products from the Mac perspective. When we started work on Stonekeep, we added all the special visual and audio effects we wanted to heighten the gaming experience. The VR Sports series grows out of the same desire to put gamers in the game.

Q: So, what's the future?
Fargo: Whatever makes games better. Multiplayer gaming, creating entire rich universes that are fully interactive, redefining gaming genres. We're going to keep building games we want to play.

Built By Gamers...

The easiest way to see the difference Interplay's "By Gamers. For Gamers" philosophy makes is to look at the kinds of games that Interplay's in-house design teams are building for themselves to play. Of course, it's also the best way for gamers to find out about the exciting products that are on their way from Interplay. Let's take a look at Interplay's next generation of hot games.

Getting the M.A.X. for Strategy Gamers



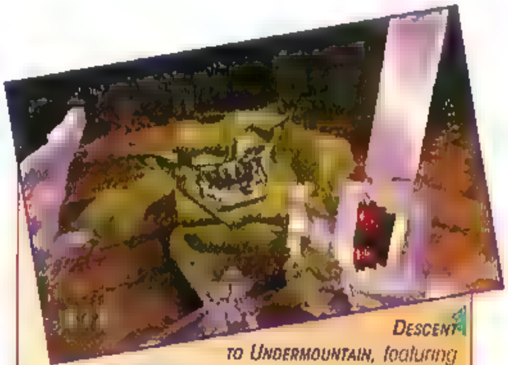
In M.A.X., you'll push yourself to the limit to survive the ultimate showdown in strategic warfare

Mechanized Assault and Exploration. That's the underlying meaning of M.A.X., an upcoming strategy game set in the far future. M.A.X.imum mayhem, M.A.X.imum destruction, and M.A.X.imum combat await gamers who are willing to face the M.A.X.imum challenge. Eight clans compete for sole control of newly discovered planets.

In M.A.X., you play a M.A.X. commander sent to a new world to build a colony, collect resources and so on while eliminating other clans' M.A.X. units and their colonies. M.A.X. offers over 60 customizable units, a unique blending of real-time and turn-based play, and various scenarios including customized and campaign games. M.A.X. supports multiplayer gaming. If you want a real good-time strategy game, look for M.A.X. to hit the shelves this month. "Definitely one to watch for"-Gamespot

Descent to Undermountain
New AD&D Action and Role-Playing

Get out of your ship and take a risk! Descent to Undermountain uses the same 3D engine made famous in Descent, but doesn't let you hide in the interior of a ship. Descent to Undermountain puts you in the Forgotten Realms™ (TSR) universe and challenges you to survive. It also features some special effects using transparencies that some said couldn't be done.



Descent to Undermountain, featuring 38 monsters, is true to the AD&D character development model

Descent to Undermountain combines role-playing elements such as standard *AD&D* character generation with real-time action in the dungeons below the city Waterdeep. It also features Kelben "Blackstaff" Aronson, the famous Waterdeep mage. The player is sent on quests that culminate in the defeat of an evil spider goddess. This game allows up to four gamers to play at the same time. While Descent to Undermountain should be on the shelves any day, players can anticipate the imminent arrival of its online version as well.

VR Baseball
A Sure Home Run for the '97 Season

From any angle, VR Baseball '97 looks hot. This Win 95 baseball sim is the only game which lets you play in a real-time 360 degree environment with realistic 3-D stadiums and polygon players that move very smoothly. This high tech baseball game is hardware accelerated creating an immersive, ultra realistic, gaming environment. You can actually play the game from any position or angle you choose. It's amazing

VR Baseball is fully licensed and includes the complete 1996 season stats, the latest team rosters (over 700 players!) as well as all the major league teams, logos, updated uniforms and stadiums, even Atlanta's new Olympic stadium. Imagine being able to play as any one of your major league favorites in a first person perspective. VR Baseball '97 is coming at you this Spring.

Starfleet Academy: The First and Only Multiplayer Startrek Action/Flight Simulator

Are there Trekkies at Interplay? The proof is Star Trek: Starfleet Academy, not only a starship flight simulator wrapped in a gripping storyline, but a dream game for most of us. You play a cadet training to become a starship commander. En route, you will engage in 29 missions while commanding a variety of starships. If you play your cards right, there's even a final mission where you get to command the USS Enterprise! You will fight over two dozen enemy vessels, including the Klingon Bird of Prey. Between missions, your actions at the academy affect how the story unfolds and the ending of the game. The academy is more than a test of mettle, or even bravery–it is a test of character.

Take command *of Starfleet's best starships, including the Enterprise itself*

Starfleet Academy features great cutting-edge technology. Translucent texture-mapping is used for cloaking effects, new AI adapts to the player's combat style, and the game's engine allows the highly detailed starships to move at breathtaking speeds.

Starfleet Academy offers multiplayer support and includes performances and interactions with three members of the original *Star Trek* cast: William Shatner as Kirk, George Takai as Sulu, and Walter Koenig as Chekov. Be prepared to enlist in Starfleet Academy this April. There is also word of a fourth Interplay *Star Trek* product (Vulcan Fury), an adventure game that should warp to store shelves late in 1997.

Fallout—A True RPG to Look Forward To

Fallout has everything hardcore RPGers want with unparalleled depth

The ultimate test of any gamer's survival skill, Fallout: A GURPS Post Nuclear Adventure, the unofficial sequel to Wasteland, is a different kind of role-playing game. Using pen-and-paper gaming's most versatile rules set, this adventure puts your character in a fallout shelter called the Vault. The Vault houses the descendants of the few survivors of a nuclear holocaust. Now, nearly 80 years since the holocaust, the Vault's water recycler has failed. Water rationing has begun, and someone must venture outside to find a replacement microchip needed to repair the water recycler. Guess who gets to go? Fallout combines incredible new technologies and SVGA graphic detailing. One of the innovative technologies used is the Talking Head Claymation character, where the character's facial expressions tell a story all their own. You should be able measure Fallout's release on your Geiger counter in the next few months.

OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS–Just How Real Is Surreal?

Tired of the predictable? Looking for a game experience that's both surreal and aesthetically pleasing? Of Light and Darkness is a nonlinear adventure game in which you play a young man attending a showing of a mysterious French artist with his date. His date finds a surrealistic painting, which she is literally pulled into. You follow her and must find a way to rescue her and rejoin the world "outside."

This game features a stunning 3D world and the work of Gil Bruvel, an award-winning artist whose exhibitions are held around the world. For the first time, an artist of this caliber has been commissioned to create art specifically for a computer game. The surreal beauty Bruvel is creating for Of Light and Darkness is valued at over $10 million if they were sold as paintings. This adventure game will cast others into shadow by the end of 1997.

A stunningly *beautiful 3D rendered world featuring the art of award winning master, Gil Bruvel*

Partners In The “By Gamers.

Even Interplay's developer and affiliate relationships were established because the gamers at Interplay liked playing the games from these partnering ventures. Let's look at some of the “By Gamers. For Gamers” offerings being built by these partnering companies.

Shiny Entertainment Goes Wild with Wild 9's

Recently acquired by Interplay, Shiny Entertainment is famous for creating Earthworm Jim, first a video game, then a cartoon television series, and now available on home video. Shiny also owns the trademarks to the Animotion process that takes drawn cartoon sketches and places them into interactive software. From pencil to processor in a few short strokes!

Shiny *Entertainment is developing Wild 9's, the story of a gang of youngsters out to win a galactic war.*

Shiny Entertainment is working on Wild 9's for the Sony PlayStation and SEGA Saturn. Wild 9's is a futuristic game that revolves around the Annapolis Cluster. The Cluster is home to thousands of planets and the arena for a galactic war between the game's heroes (a young earthling and a gang of eight alien teenagers) and the evil entity Karn, whose army, led by Colonel Curtz (ever see *Apocalypse Now?*), has been systematically destroying planets in the Cluster.

Shiny is also working on MDK (Murder Death Kill), that Interplay will distribute outside of North America. This science-fiction action game features missions through eight alien cities that roam around on platforms, destroying everything on Earth. It's a game packed with high-speed, accurately rendered real-time graphics; loads of monsters; several weapon choices, and multiple endings depending on your performance. Be sure to keep close tabs on MDK.

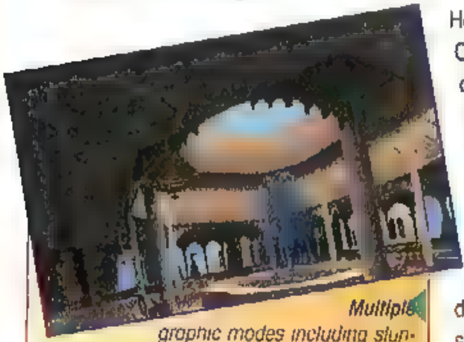
Lining Up a Straight Shot

Celeris, a leading developer of surveillance and tracking software for the military, has partnered again with Interplay to develop the award-winning Virtual Pool and is now working on Virtual Pool '98. Virtual Pool '98 was designed by physicists and mathematicians to provide the most realistic pool simulation ever. Featuring a seamless interface, realistic shots, and multiple perspectives during play, Virtual Pool '98 is so realistic that it's guaranteed to improve your game.

Fight Evil, Conquer the Universe, Play Golf

A father's death and a son's nightmares–it sounds like the U.K.'s Gremlin Interactive borrowed a page out of Shakespeare. Yet Realms of the Haunting is a very different kind of story. This futuristic horror adventure features real-time combat and places you in the Hamlet-like role of a young man whose nightmares following his father's death lead him to the village of Hellston in Cornwall. He discovers that he is the one prophesied to find an important artifact that can control the nature of the universe.

Realms of the Haunting features a frighteningly detailed 3D environment alive with predatory demons



Multiple graphic modes including stunning 640x480 SVGA full screen resolution

This game's action elements combine with its musical score to create an immersive, tension-filled atmosphere. Realms of the Haunting features rich graphic detail, numerous evil entities, puzzles, battles, and nearly two hours of cinematic sequences. Keep an eye over your shoulder as this Gremlin's Haunting should appear within the next month or two.

For Gamers Philosophy

As well as being the home of many alleged haunts, the U.K. is also known as the birthplace of golf. VR GOLF'97, another outcome of the Interplay/Gremlin relationship is an amazingly realistic golf simulator that lets the gamer play golf in a real-time 360 degree world. You can view your lie from any angle and strike the ball in any direction. VR GOLF brings a fresh perspective to golf with its dramatic sweeping camera views that you can shift on the fly. These cameras really showcase the four courses that come with this game including Kiawah Island's scenic "Ocean Course."

VR Golf comes loaded with 4 courses, including Kiawah Island and is the only true real-time 360 degree golf game

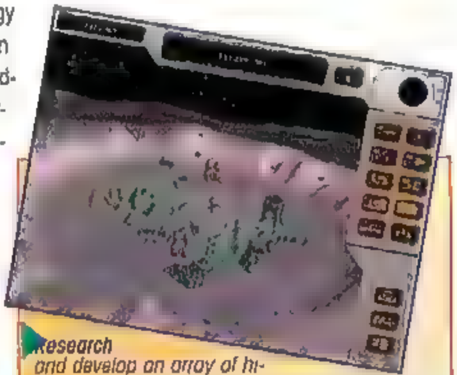
VR GOLF '97 seems to have it all; licensed courses, course disk compatibility, pro and amateur tours, fast course set up, customized club selection, a simple user interface and multi-player capabilities. Plus all the specialty shots, like draw and fade, found in real golf. You'll find playing a round with this game very enjoyable. Look for VR GOLF' 97 in stores this Spring.

Blast your way through RELOADED's 12 blood-soaked worlds with incredible lighting effects and non-stop gameplay

Reloaded is the sequel to the award-winning Gremlin PlayStation title, LOADED. RELOADED takes this arcade game several light years further. Featuring revamped original characters (such as Mamma and Butch), new characters, and CHEB, the reincarnation of FUB, RELOADED includes more levels, more puzzles, and a stronger story line than LOADED. Don't face your computer unarmed. RELOADED is available now in all discriminating software outlets–cocked, locked, and ready to rock.

What if the tabloids are right about "ancient astronauts"? Gremlin's SANDWARRIORS turns that premise into an arcade flight simulator that blends the iconography of ancient Egypt with futuristic technology. SANDWARRIORS features 20 ship types, 10 different weapon types, and 20 different missions. SANDWARRIORS will make its stand on store shelves in late spring.

There is no second place in FRAGILE ALLEGIANCE, a multiplayer space strategy game where your goal is the complete annihilation of your opponents. Set in the far future, where you are commissioned to build and develop an asteroid-based mining colony, FRAGILE ALLEGIANCE includes missions, combat scenarios, and real-time gameplay. FRAGILE ALLEGIANCE supports multiplayer gameplay and offers an in-game e-mail system that allows gamers to send messages to their friends and foes. Establish your FRAGILE ALLEGIANCE starting in January.



Research and develop an array of hi-tech weapons, buildings and spacecraft to build a galactic empire in FRAGILE ALLEGIANCE

How enterprising are you? HARDWAR is Gremlin's futuristic strategy game crossed with a flight simulator that allows you to find out. In a very nonlinear story line, you find yourself as a mercenary exiled to the planet Titan after the destruction of Earth. Your objective is to build a ship using theft, money earned from missions, or through your own explorations. You must also uncover clues leading to information that will get you off the planet, and you must then escape from Titan. The escape begins in summer.

Hardwa True real-time gameplay in random interactive missions

More From Interplay...

Descent II: The Infinite Abyss... How Deep Can You Go?

Let's head into a Parallax universe, where we can find the developers of the Descent engine. After developing last year's Descent II, Parallax has gone even deeper in creating their latest challenge: Descent II: The Infinite Abyss. But brace yourself, this game is even faster than Descent II.

The Infinite Abyss features 22 new levels (infested by new robots) in which you'll race through sewers, rat mazes, and other such locales where Descent players feel at home. Look for 12 new robots to accompany this latest Descent. An exciting plus is that Infinite Abyss players can create their own levels and robots. Included with the product is a new multiplayer game *Horde*. Look for Descent II: The Infinite Abyss in the depths of your favorite software stores right now.

Descent II: The Infinite Abyss Can you escape 22 new levels and 12 new robot enemies in Descent II: The Infinite Abyss?

Planet runners are loaded with blazing firepower including 150mm Gatling Guns, guided missiles and tactical Nukes

Shattered Steel Strikes With a Vengeance

In the Wild West, the marshals wore six-guns. In the far future, they'll use robots. Canada's Bioware Corporation (which is also working on a role-playing game set in TSR's Forgotten Realms® universe) has teamed up with Interplay to put you on the cosmic front er in Shattered Steel.

In Shattered Steel, you play a mercenary investigating a communications breakdown in a mining camp on Lanios 3. You discover aliens are destroying the camp and its inhabitants, and you must stop them! Featuring 50 nonlinear missions taking place on two different worlds, the game challenges the player with over 20 different types of robotic alien predators. With 25 weapons at your disposal, including plasma cannons and tactical nukes, the explosive combat in Shattered Steel can shatter your nerves, if you don't stay cool.

Shattered Steel supports 16-player action and includes a scenario builder for customizing multiplayer games. You can pick up your piece of Shattered Steel in stores now! Look for an add-on disk that forges new missions, new robots, and new weapons in the next few months.

Are You Willing to Die By The Sword?

Interplay discovered Treyarch Invention and its promising new title Die by the Sword. In the spirit of Bilestoad, Die by the Sword looks to be the ultimate in hand-to-hand combat games . With the use of VSIM Motion Control technology, the full range of human motion can be simulated during combat, allowing players to realistically interact with their environment while battling opponents Combat has realistic effects as swords react with swords when they clash and players take realistic damage during combat.

Players can create custom moves to enhance their hand-to-hand combat skills. Over 25 computer opponents can be battled in solitaire games, while multiplayer support allows up to four players to battle things out in a winner-take-all competition. Your waiting opponents want you to Die by the Sword this summer.

VSIM Motion Control allows players to fully control every element of their character's movements

As Interplay Moves And Expands Into The Future

With the case closed on what Interplay has up its sleeve for gamers both in and out of house, it's time to set our sights on the distant future. Interplay's future offerings to gamers include sequels to its successful past and future games. Among the titles for which sequels are planned are Stonekeep, Castles II, Earthworm Jim, GURPS, M.A.X., and Shattered Steel, the latter three discussed in these pages. Plus all new orginals bring incredible technology packed with state-of-the-art new engines and new innovations in game design that will have gamers coming back for more.

Interplay: Ready to Engage

If the future is multiplayer online gaming, then Interplay is there already. Interplay is working with ENGAGE Games Online to provide a game community where gamers can meet online to play the kinds of quality games that Interplay has been making for years. One particularly cool thing about ENGAGE Games Online is that gamers will be able to get onto it from any of the major online networks that they currently use (such as AOL and Prodigy). On the network, gamers will be able to play against one another in real time while sending messages to keep the contests lively. Among the many Interplay products sceduled to appear on ENGAGE are an online version of the best-selling Descent, Castles II, Dragon Dice (an *AD&D* product), Descent to Undermountain, and Shattered Steel. ENGAGE also has the exclusive rights to bring WarCraft II to online gamers! Engage is available on the internet at **engagegames.com**.

Parting Thoughts

"By Gamers, for Gamers" is more than just a motto; it's Interplay's guiding star. The people at Interplay like the same computer games that we all do, and those are the kinds of games this company is dedicated to making. The enthusiasm Interplay brings to creating new gaming experiences is no less electric than the computers used to make them. Interplay's passion for playing games is exceeded only by its passion for delivering the goods to those who play them. That is the reason that Interplay devotes so much energy to the immersive details that make for rewarding gameplay. Interplay lives by its motto: "By Gamers, For Gamers."

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DIFFICULTY LEVEL INTERMEDIATE

Brains 1, Beauty 0

Solid Ice Scores With Intelligent Hockey Gameplay, But Graphics Get A Penalty

by Gordon Goble

Talk about your lousy timing. Coinciding with the debut of EA Sports' colossal NHL Hockey 97, quite possibly the best-looking sports title of all time, comes Montreal-based game developer Strategy First with its own take on hockey. It's called Solid Ice, and in many ways it's the antithesis of the EA game. Solid Ice is built around the idea that quality artificial intelligence and varied gameplay are what PC pucksters want. And they are, they are! But somehow these wonderful ideals became camouflaged in muddled graphics on their way to the screen, and that's too bad because the program does hold a lot of promise. You've just got to peek through the cracks to see it.

WHAT THE PUCK?

When you first take to the Solid Ice rink, you'll notice immediately that the game is far from 3D. What you will see, aside from a monstrous scoreboard/information center down below, is a seemingly undersized ice surface that claims merely three-fifths of the total screen space. In-your-face it certainly isn't, with just a solitary side-to-side panning perspective showcasing players that aren't nearly big enough for numbers or team crests.

As play begins to unfold, a couple of words will immediately spring to mind—namely "disjointed" and "confusing." I've tried my best to analyze just what makes Solid Ice a hard game to play, and have come to the decision that a ponderous frame rate is the big culprit. Players are here, then suddenly they're over there, and pucks seem to temporarily disappear from view.

But a poor frame rate is not responsible for sticks and bodies that poke *through* nets, gelatinous scrums of players that lack any visual clarity, and a general "fogginess" surrounding much of the action. It's like being in a weird dream state, one that will begin to clear up only if you've got the patience to stick with it.

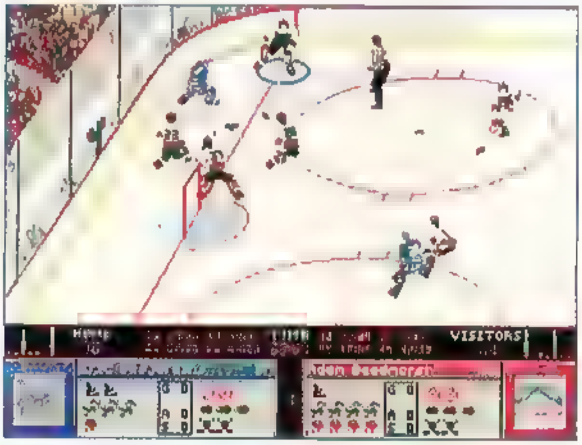
MY BRAIN HURTS

If you do, you'll come to appreciate some of the more positive aspects of the game. You'll eventually understand that player animations—gazillions of individual moves that you just won't see anywhere else—are behind that turtle of a frame rate. Beyond the fog, you'll see that player and team AI is probably as strong and even more varied than that of Virgin's NHL PowerPlay 96—and that's saying something. You'll also notice that shot and goal totals, penalties, and fatigue are authentically portrayed. In short, there's a good game here struggling to break free of its confines.

Strategy First uses the giant rinkside interface to plunk every possible bit of information in front of you. There's the typical stuff, such as team logos, score, and game clock, but there are also welcome innovations, including a penalty clock with space for *four* penalties and a detailed stat and data section for each and every player currently on the ice.

Solid Ice's numerous editors let you alter just about every element in the game. Here you'll find a NASCAR Racing–like paint program for customizing logos and color schemes, a player editor for skill alterations, and a lineup editor that'll get Lemieux and Jagr on the same five-man unit. Solid Ice is licensed by the NHL Players' Association but not the National Hockey League, so you'll be dealing with the real players but not the real teams and logos—all the more reason to change 'em!

A fascinating but flawed look at PC hockey, Solid Ice should be noted for the things it does right. Hearty recommendations, however, will have to wait until next time.



HEAVY FOG Hockey aficionados will appreciate Solid Ice's intelligent gameplay, but the muddled 2D graphics will unfortunately obscure the action.

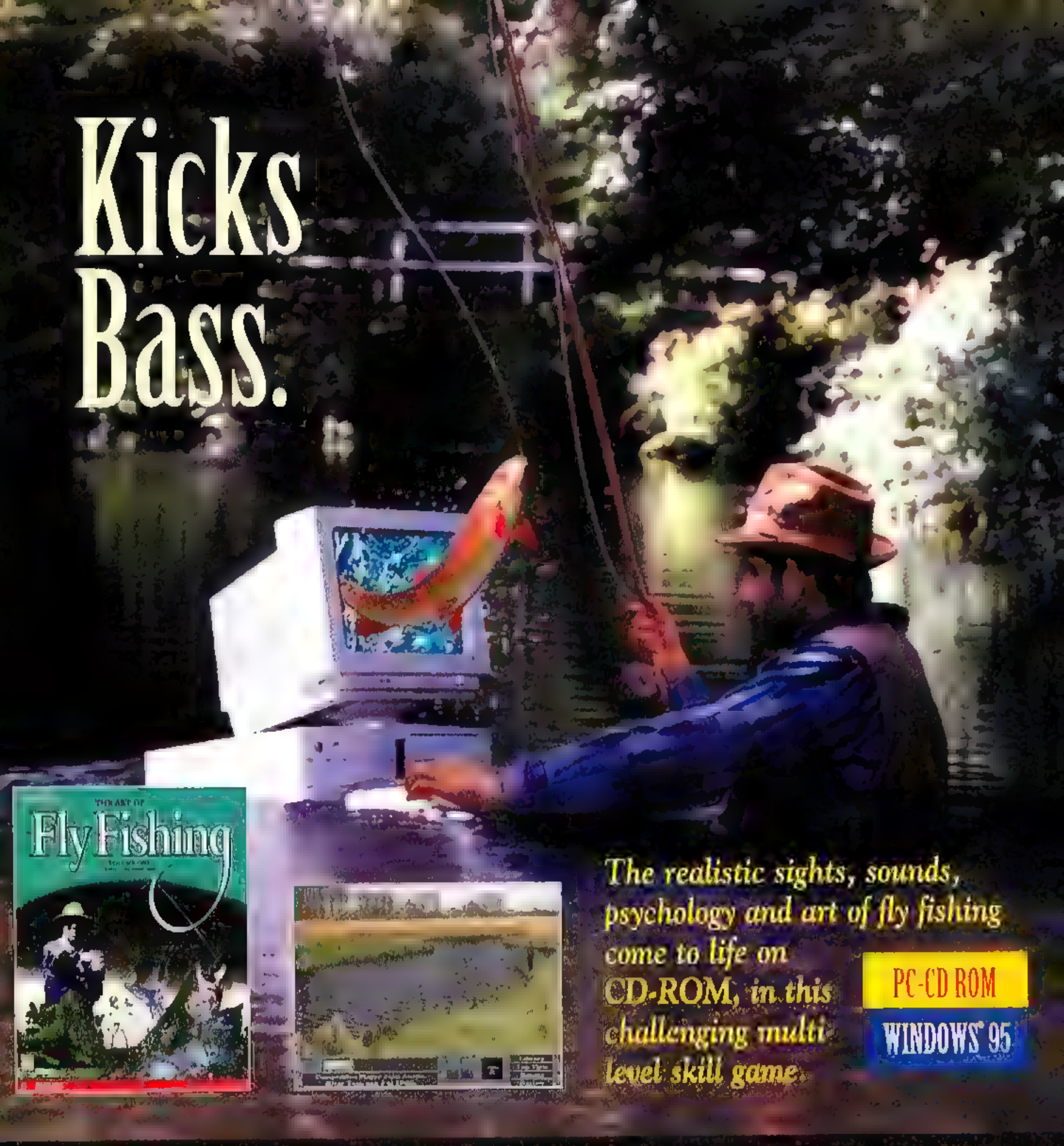
Price: $24.99
System Requirements: 486 DX2-66 or better, MS DOS 5.0 or higher (or Windows 95), 7 MB RAM (12 MB for Windows 95), 26 MB hard disk space, VESA-compliant video card (w/1 MB VRAM for SVGA graphics), 2x CD-ROM, Microsoft-compatible mouse; Sound Blaster-compatible sound card.
# of Players: 1-2
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
Designer: Strategy First
Publisher: Empire Interactive
Germantown, MD
(301) 916-9302
Reader Service #: 332

▸APPEAL: Serious, patient hockey fans with a preference for hockey's strategy and subtlety.

▸PROS: Playmaking variety, great in-game stat delivery, editors galore, artificial intelligence that's actually intelligent.

▸CONS: Awkward graphics that seriously obstruct gameplay, low-tech interfaces, tiny 2D rink.

RATED ★★★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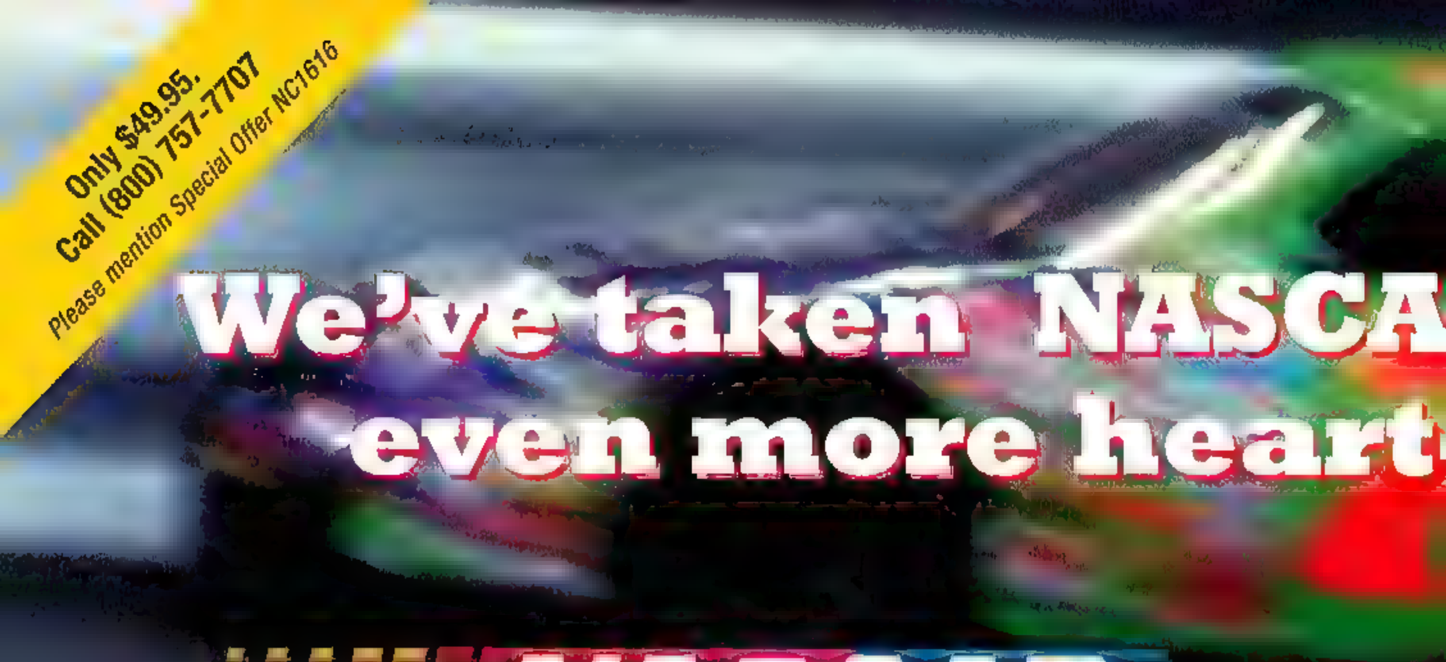

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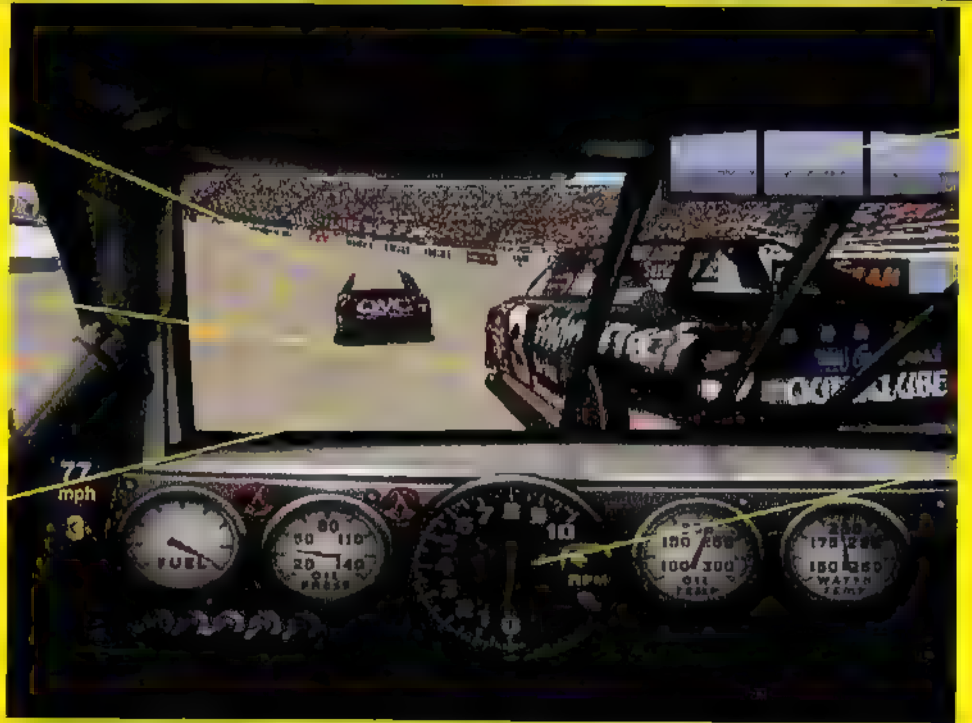

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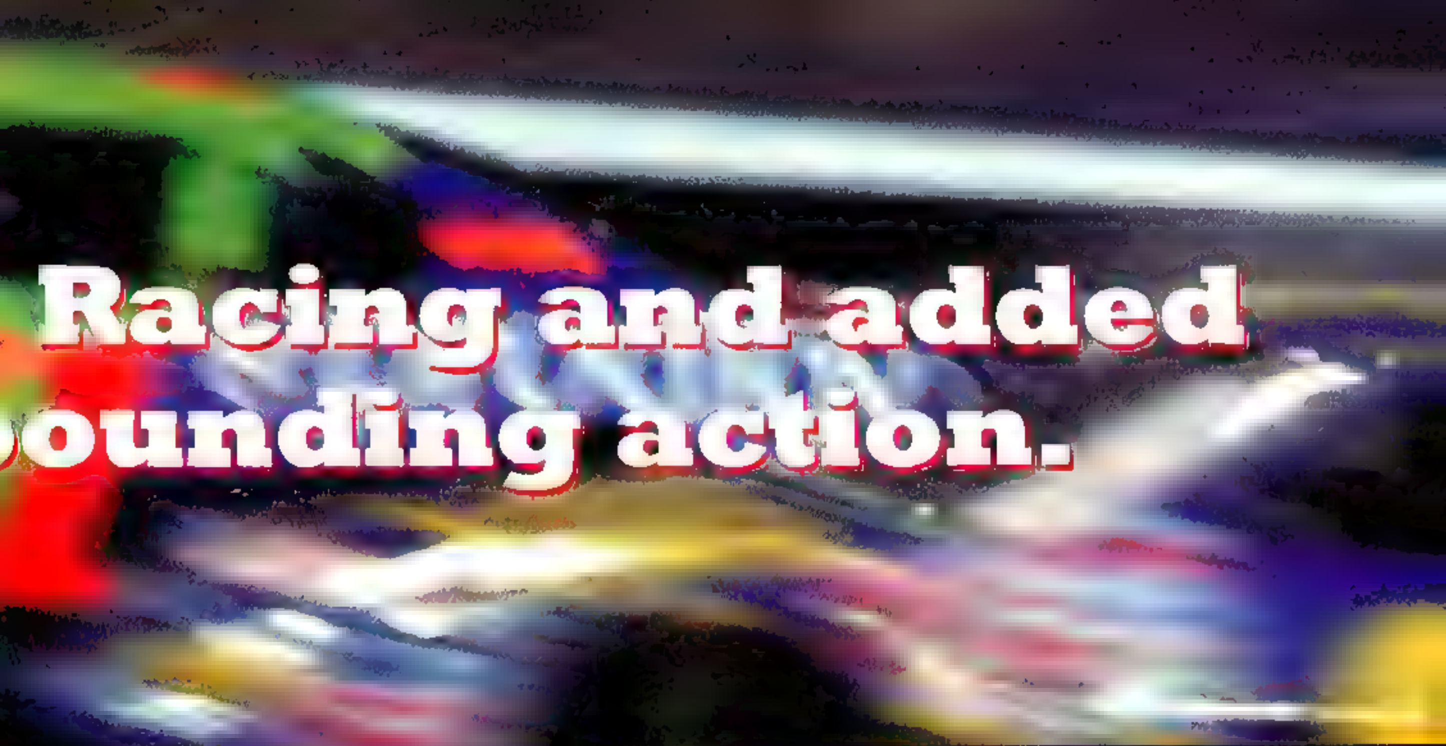

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- Faster graphics in SVGA
- Officially licensed by NASCAR.

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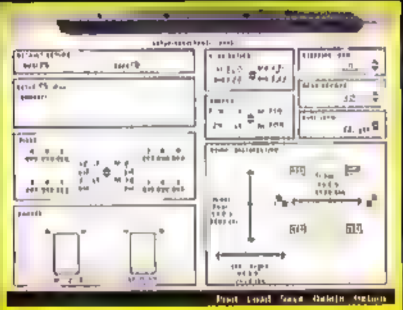
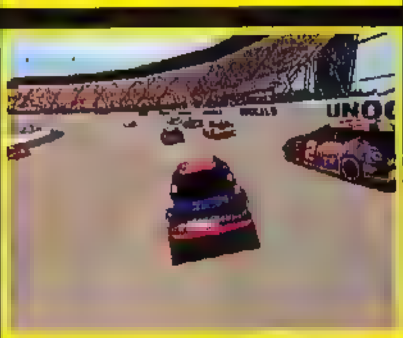


Change tires, suspension and more to customize your car to your driving style.

Network play lets you race door-to-door and head-to-head with up to 7 other players

ow you can personalize your car by creating your wn unique designs and sponsorships in the ASCAR 2 paintkit



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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #234

DIFFICULTY LEVEL EASY

Smash-Mouth Football

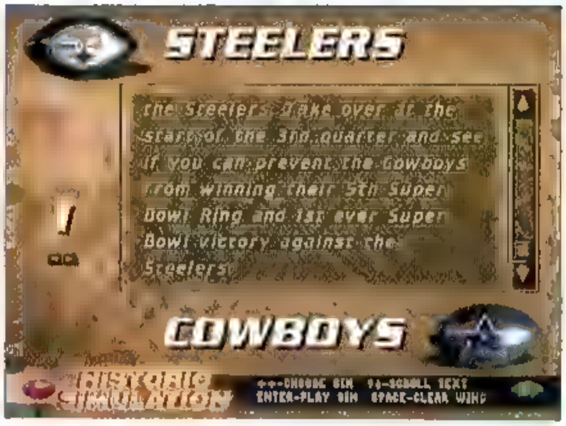
QB Club '97 Is A Real Blitz

by Scott A. May

Football as electronic entertainment has always been something of a dichotomy. Arguably a near-perfect blend of strategy and action, the sport draws fans that typically fall into two camps: coaches and players. Armchair generals staunchly believe that play management is the name of the game. Action enthusiasts respond with a grunt and head-slap. Personally, either by principle or sheer intimidation, I usually agree with the latter group. After all, toss out the coaches and their playbooks and you can still play a darn good game of football. The reverse is certainly not true.

PC football titles, in particular, tend to be victims of their own ambitions, desperately trying to be everything to everyone. With few exceptions—notably Dynamix's Front Page Sports: Football series—the results are generally unsatisfactory. Console-based games, on the other hand, focus on action in the trenches. No playbook editors or front-office politics here—just down-and-dirty gameplay with myriad options to keep things interesting.

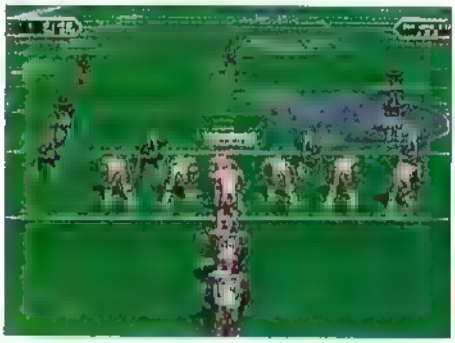
If you'd rather play rough-and-tumble arcade football—as opposed to a spreadsheet-with-shoulder-pads statistical sim—Acclaim has just the ticket with NFL Quarterback Club '97, an almost pixel-by-pixel port of its console-born hit.



The Steelers take over at the start of the 3rd quarter and see if you can prevent the Cowboys from winning their 5th Super Bowl Ring and 1st ever Super Bowl victory against the Steelers.

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS Taking over a classic matchup, like last year's Super Bowl, with just minutes to go is a neat idea. But why didn't they also give us the option of replaying these great games in their entirety?

Price: $39.99
System Requirements: IBM-compatible 486DX2-66 or better, DOS 5.0 or greater (Windows 95 compatible), 8 MB RAM, 23 MB hard disk space, 1 MB VESA-compatible SVGA card, 2x CD-ROM drive. Supports keyboard, mouse, 2- and 4-button gamepads, Gravis GRiP and Sound Blaster—compatible sound cards.
# of Players: 1-6
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
Designer: Iguana Entertainment
Publisher: Acclaim Entertainment
Glen Cove, NY
(516) 656-5000
Reader Service #: 333



GRAPHIC CUT BLOCKS Even on the hottest PC, there are a few rough visual edges. You can toggle graphic quality for performance, from 320x200 up to 1024x768.

BUILDING A CONTENDER

Interestingly, while the Saturn version of QB Club '97 proved somewhat anemic, the PlayStation rendition is an underrated champ. Luckily, Iguana chose the PlayStation as its benchmark when porting QB Club '97 over to the PC. The translation to DOS is excellent, although you'll need a super system to match the original's smooth delivery and concise control. The game even runs well within Windows 95, provided you have ample RAM and don't plan on doing much multitasking.

All 30 NFL teams and personnel are represented here, based on their '96-97 preseason rosters, including the new Baltimore Ravens. Teams are rated in seven performance categories: passing, running, blocking, tackling, blitzing, coverage, and special teams. Likewise, players are rated in three categories, according to position: QBs (accuracy, range, and scrambling), fullbacks (agility, speed, and strength), and so on. Individual ratings are most tapped for player trades, which the program handles well but unrealistically. Trade Steve Young even-up to the Jets for a third-string lineman? No problem here, but not bloody likely. However nonsensical, unlimited player trades help breathe a bit of fantasy life into the game.

NFL Play mode offers a choice of preseason, season, playoff, and Pro Bowl games, using either the original or traded rosters. Both season and playoff modes continue through to the Super Bowl. Quick Play mode randomly selects two teams for a single-game contest. The third play mode, Simulation, injects a lot of flavor into the game. Here you can reenact historic contests, entering the game at critical junctures. For example, take control of the Steelers in the third quarter of

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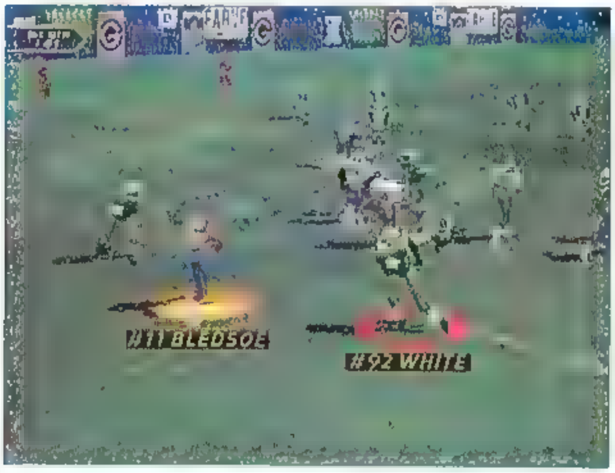
There are 50 specific simulations available, including fantasy games such as a dream matchup between the 1995 and 1977 Cowboy teams. If that's not enough, you can also create and save up to five custom simulations, applying up to 14 setup options.

Each game mode allows up to six players to compete, either on the same or opposing teams. The game supports a wide variety of controllers, including keyboard, mouse, two- and four-button joysticks, and the Gravis GRiP adapter. Both keyboard and mouse controls are awkward at best, and because the game was originally designed with four-button console controllers in mind, a two-button joystick severely limits both play calling and on-field executions. The game definitely favors Gravis controllers, either the GRiP or GamePad varieties.



SNOW JOB Adverse weather affects both mobility and visibility, keeping QBs in the pocket longer, to the delight of blitzing linebackers.

YOU'RE IN THE PROS NOW, ROOKIE

Pre-game options include penalties (on/off), weather (rain, snow, hot, cold), field type (grass or turf), quarter length (5, 10, or 15 minutes), and difficulty (rookie, pro, or all-pro). Acclaim boasts flexible computer AI that will learn and react to your play-calling style. This feature, plus each player's individual abilities, increases according to skill level. The rookie level cuts you a lot of slack, while all-pro difficulty can be painfully unforgiving for beginning players.

Following the coin toss—a feature surprisingly absent from the console versions—and a quick visual tour of the fully rendered stadium, the game begins. Approximately 1,000 offensive and defensive variations are claimed to be available through the side-scrolling playbook. Play calling is a simple three-step process: choose the formation, yardage (short, medium, or long), and actual play design. Key blocking assignments, line shifts, and receiver routes are all clearly labeled. Also included are so-called signature plays of a few dozen top quarterbacks, although most seem to be variations of the generic long bomb. On defense, you can hand-pick your coverage or let the computer take its best guess by simply choosing Smart D. Up to four audibles can be assigned for both offense and defense.

Play execution, controller responsiveness, and graphical quality are dramatically affected by your hardware setup. Slow machines equipped with weak video cards will suffer from choppy animation and frustrating control delays. Thankfully, Iguana offers several options to improve performance on older systems, including a choice of seven display resolutions, adjustable on the fly from a low of 320x200 up to 1024x768. Low-res displays will greatly improve animation and control at the expense of graphics, which will be rather chunky. Hi-res gives the on-field graphics a more polished sheen, but if your hardware can't handle it, you'll experience dreadful frame skipping and sluggish control. You can also adjust texture-mapping and turn off extraneous graphic effects to help smooth things out.

INSTANT REPLAY REVISITED

Once game performance is tweaked to your satisfaction, the actual on-field action is fairly fluid. Despite a certain degree of unavoidable graphic blockiness, in which players sometimes seem melded together, the animation is quite expressive, using motion-capturing technology. Line blocks open visible holes for backs to juke and dive through, while hands play a critical role in blocking and pass receiving/deflection. The pace is just right, especially for proper execution of timing patterns. Although such details aren't always discernable in the heat of play, they are clearly visible in instant replay, which is one of the best I've seen.

Individual player attributes can play a big factor, particularly at all-pro skill levels. Power backs such as Jerome Bettis are more likely to plow through the line, while finesse runners like Marcus Allen are more nimble in their cuts. Likewise, teams with a monstrous defensive line are more likely to block passes or disrupt the backfield. This is always a difficult area to assess, in terms of realism and individual effort, but for the most part, the designers have done an admirable job.

Among the game's handful of sore points are the lack of player injuries and sometimes spotty officiating. Rookie-level computer AI can also be comically unrealistic, producing game scores in the high 50s, even with five-minute quarters, against statistically superior opponents. Like most arcade-style games in this category, this title fares best when played against other warm-blooded competitors.

There are certainly some chinks in this game's armor, but then again, the perfect football game has yet to be built. Overall, play-oriented fans should find NFL QB CLUB '97 one of the best implementations of hands-on football action yet on the PC.

▸APPEAL: Any football fan who's longed for console-style gridiron action on the PC.

▸PROS: The best on-field player controls of any PC football game, complemented with tons of great options. The action hit MADDEN 97 should have been.

▸CONS: No player injuries, strange officiating, screwy trading AI, and high scoring, even for an action game. Not quite up to the PlayStation version, despite the high hardware requirements.

ACCESS
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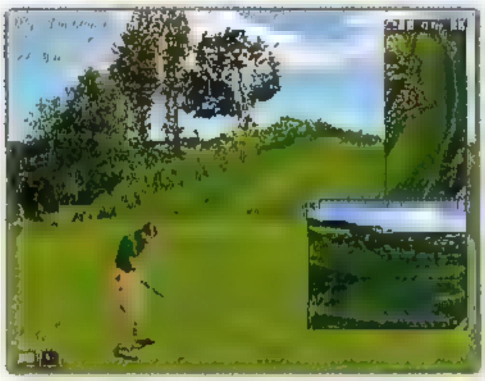
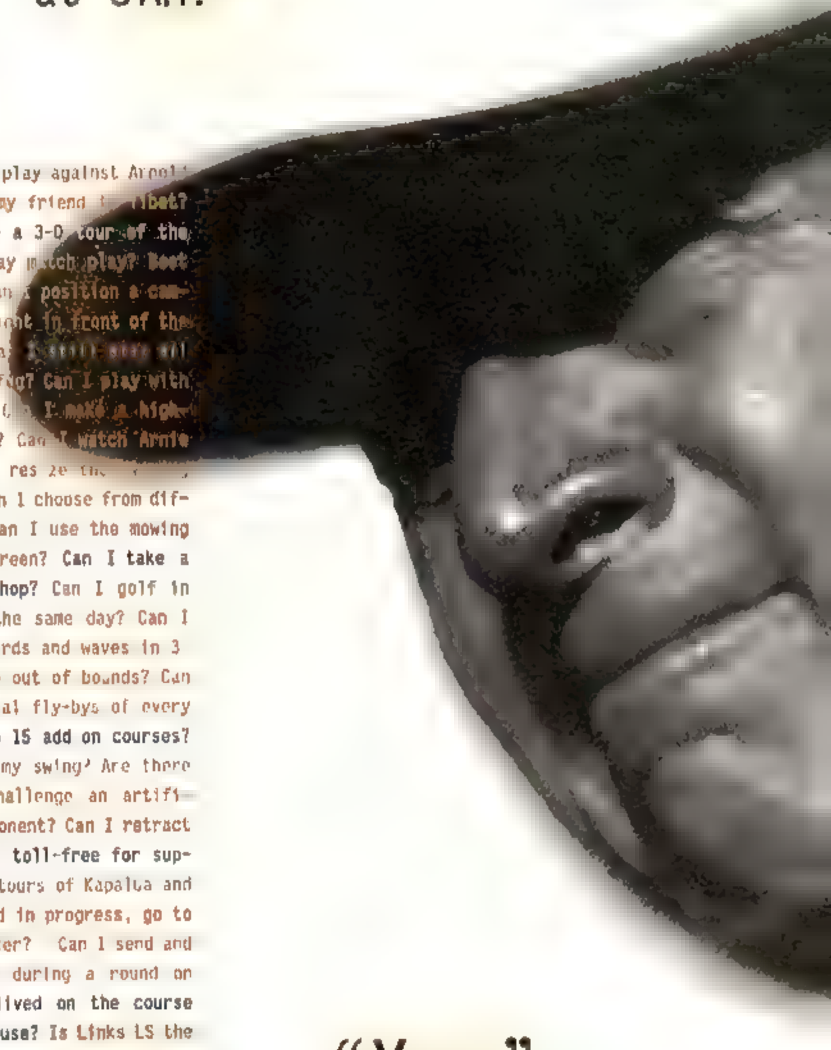
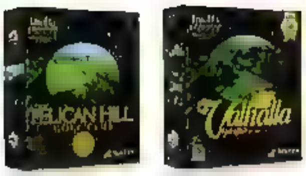


“Can I challenge Arnold Palmer
and my buddy in Tibet
to a skins game
on Maui
in heavy fog
at 3AM?”



Can I golf in 16.7 million colors? Can I play against Arnold Palmer at Latrobe? Can I play against my friend in Tibet? Can either of them beat me? Can I take a 3-D tour of the Kapalua Plantation Clubhouse? Can I play match play? Best ball? Skins? Can I add in my own sounds? Can I position a camera over the ocean? Can I place a camera right in front of the ball? Won't that break the camera lens? Can I still play all the Links Championship Courses? Can I add fog? Can I play with WIN 95? Can I get 1600X1200 resolution? Can I make a high-arching wedge shot back up on the green? Can I watch Arnie react to a good shot? A bad shot? Can I resize the windows? Can I see the tees break off? Can I choose from different golfers? Both male and female? Can I use the mowing stripes to read the contour of the green? Can I take a Virtual Reality tour of Arnie's workshop? Can I golf in Hawaii, Pennsylvania and Chicago on the same day? Can I get a 3AM tee time? Can I hear the birds and waves in 3D stereo? Can I hit my ball 1/2 mile out of bounds? Can I play from there? Can I watch aerial fly-bys of every hole? Can I choose from more than 15 add on courses? Can I watch an instant replay of my swing? Are there multiple camera views? Can I challenge an artificially-intelligent computer opponent? Can I retract the control panel? Can I call toll-free for support? Can I take multimedia tours of Kapalua and Latrobe? Can I save a round in progress, go to dinner, and finish it later? Can I send and receive text messages during a round on the modem? If I lived on the course could I find my house? Is Links LS the most realistic golf simulation ever? → “Yes.”



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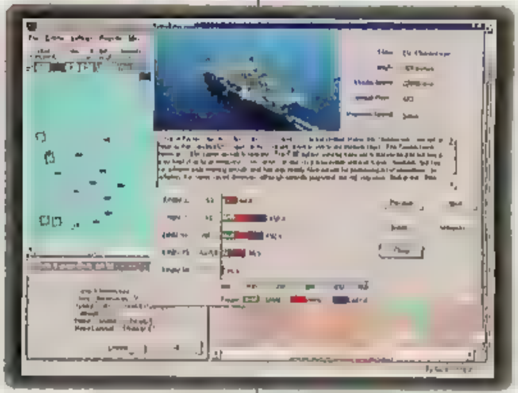

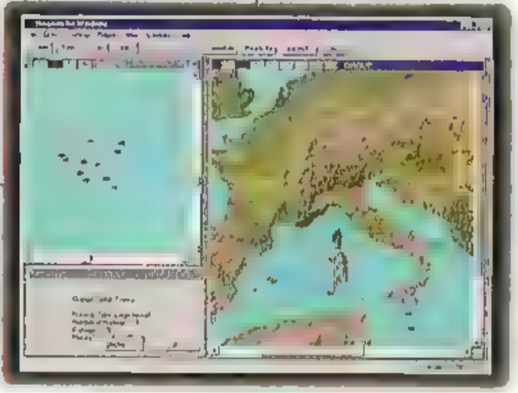

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #170

The High Sierra

Dynamix Prepares To Snatch Back The Flight Sim Crown

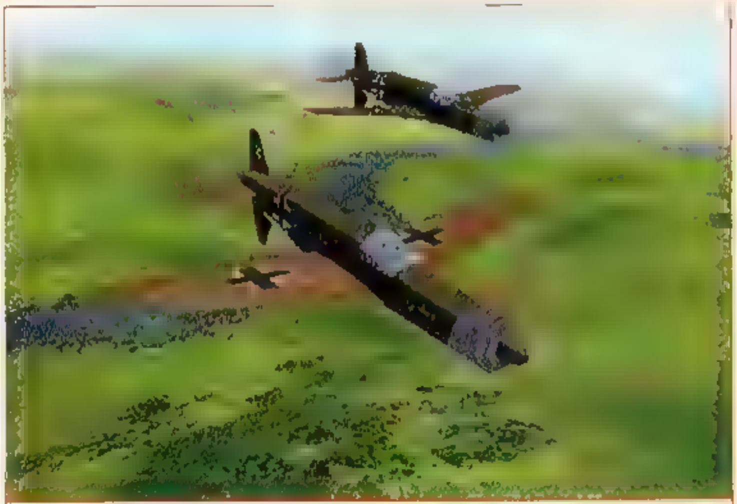
Life is full of odd coincidences. The night before I left to see the latest sims in development at Sierra's Dynamix division, I was having a spirited discussion with some members of CompuServe's Flight Sim Forum about my decision not to include SECRET WEAPONS OF THE LUFTWAFFE (SWOTL) in my November list of top 15 sims of all time. Some didn't agree with my decision to give the nod to SWOTL's predecessor, THEIR FINEST HOUR: THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN (a decision reached because most of the things that made SWOTL special were pioneered in TFH). One thing we did all agree on was that we'd like to see a modern version of SWOTL. But with Larry Holland knee-deep in ultra-profitable *Star Wars* games, that doesn't seem likely any time soon. At least…not from LucasArts.

BROTHERS IN ARMS

Online arguments still rattling through my head, I arrived in scenic Eugene, Oregon, to get a look at the progress of RED BARON II and PRO PILOT. Before we got into those, though, producer Graeme Bayless asked me if I'd like to talk to his brother Scot about his latest project, ACES: X-FIGHTERS. A rhetorical question, I assumed.

As Scot Bayless described X-FIGHTERS, I realized it sounded a lot like a hybrid of the very best features of ACES OVER EUROPE and SWOTL, held together by the hot new simulation engine developed for RED BARON II. This was starting to sound good.

> “If Bayless can pull X-FIGHTERS off, people may finally retire their ancient LucasArts sims.”



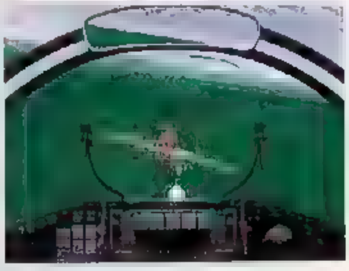
SON OF SWOTL ACES: X-FIGHTERS will feature experimental aircraft such as the Dornier Do-335 Arrow.

At its basic level, X-FIGHTERS will look a lot like a modern ACES OVER EUROPE. Mustangs, Thunderbolts, P-38s, and other planes will battle it out with Messerschmitts and Focke-Wulfs. But the real fun starts when you start playing “what if.” During World War II, the Allies back-burnered new technologies such as jet engines, pouring their resources instead into producing proven designs in mass quantities. But

ON THE RADAR

▸ Jane's ADVANCED TACTICAL FIGHTERS will get the US NAVY FIGHTERS 97 treatment. Look for a Windows 95 version of the simulation to appear sometime this spring. The likely title is ATF GOLD, and it will include the planes and missions from both ATF and the NATO FIGHTERS expansion disc. The Jane's team is looking to eventually integrate the sim's multiplayer capabilities with those built into USNF 97, so those of you with suicidal tendencies will be able to take F-8 Crusaders up against Eurofighter 2000s.

This integration may not make it into the first release, though, because it appears ATF GOLD will feature a multiplayer campaign module that will make tying in with USNF 97 a bit more complicated. Designer Paul Grace wouldn't give any details, but he promises that these new multiplayer features will be unique, and “a helluva lot of fun.”



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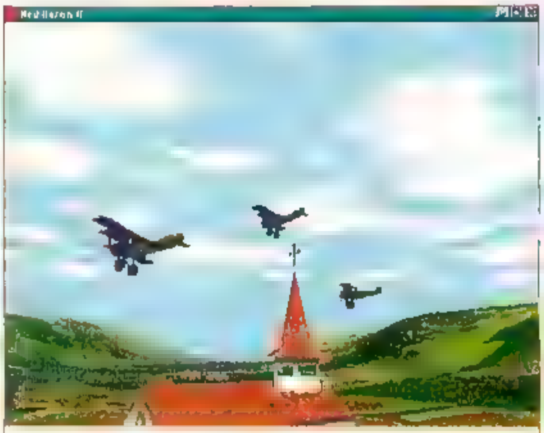
DENNY ATKIN

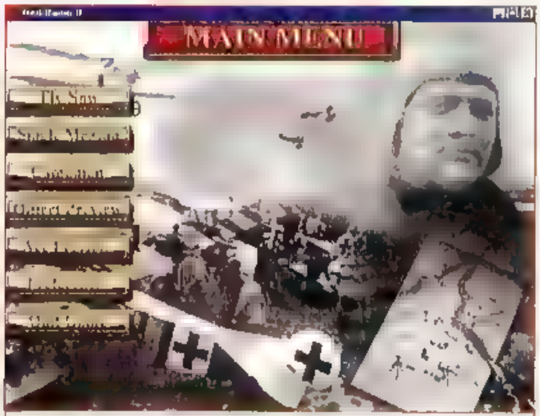
what if the U.S. had instead decided to use jet technology to defeat the Third Reich?

On the Axis side, Hitler delayed the Me-262 jet by ordering its modification into a fighter-bomber. By the time the jet was ready to enter service, the Axis infrastructure was so damaged that only a small percentage of the Me-262s produced entered combat. Hundreds sat engineless and useless because the Allies had destroyed the factories that made ball bearings needed for the Me-262's engines. But what if the Luftwaffe had fielded the Me-262 and other advanced designs a year earlier in the war?

These are the kinds of questions the X-FIGHTERS team hopes you'll be able to answer when playing their sim. Like SWOTL, X-FIGHTERS will give you a chance to take aircraft that were still in the prototype or design stage into battle and see how they would have fared. Look for planes that were just about to go into service near the end of the war, such as the P-80 Shooting Star and Dornier 335 Arrow. You'll also be able to take to the skies in experimental planes such as the General Motors XP-75 (a plane built from spare parts from other aircraft designs) and Northrop's wacky XP-56, a tail-less, swept-wing, pusher-prop interceptor. The final aircraft list hasn't been decided yet, but look for plenty of odd designs that have never before been seen in sims.



STEEPLE CHASE The rolling hills of Europe give RED BARON II a more realistic look than SILENT THUNDER, the first game that used the improved 3-Space engine.



INTERFACE LIFT The virtual flight headquarters metaphor present in early alpha versions has been replaced with an interface reminiscent of the original RED BARON.

The X-FIGHTERS team also has ambitious plans for the game's multiplayer modes. It's way too early to tell exactly what will be possible by the time the program is released, but the team is hoping to support squadron-level multiplayer action.

As this is written, X-FIGHTERS is still in the earliest stages of development. The team is shooting for release in late 1997—not an unrealistic date when you consider they're building on the RED BARON II simulation engine.

LATE TO THE BATTLE

Speaking of RED BARON II, work is progressing nicely on that World War I sim, which now looks like a definite April release. The team is determined not to let the sim slip past that date. To this end, they're carefully watching features that could slip the release date—notably 3D card support and multiplayer—and they're prepared to omit them from the initial release if necessary. (Producer Graeme Bayless assured me, however, that if they don't make it into the initial release, they will be available soon after.)

Since the game was previewed in these pages last year, the interface has been given a complete facelift. Instead of wandering around a virtual base, you'll instead choose missions and view the battlefield using an interface very similar to that in the original RED BARON. Although the preliminary interface was classy, this one makes it much easier to jump right into the action.

Since our preview, the already impres-

CG TIPS!

▶ Getting blown away in Interactive Magic's APACHE? Here are some cheats that will turn your standard Army-issue chopper into AirWolf.

▶ Type in the either of the following case-sensitive login names to set up your super copter.

Flamdwyn Aiobhell gives you infinite weapons.

Lyn Wins gives you infinite weapons, invulnerability, and the helicopter model cheats.

▶ The model cheats are:

Alt-T: Overtorque toggle

Ctrl-T: Terrain-following toggle

Alt-V: No fuel

Shift-V: Refuel

Shift-Ctrl-Alt-Tab (with overtorque off): Speed warp. Each successive press of this key combo will cycle warp from 0 through 9.

▶ There are also a number of key combinations for fine-tuning the visual environment:

Alt-F1: Flat-shaded polygons

Alt-F2: Gouraud-shaded polygons

Alt-F3: Gouraud-shaded and texture-mapped polygons

Alt-F4: Toggle shadows (only on clear days)

Alt-1 through 7: Change visual range

Alt-8: Graduated horizon

Alt-9: Gouraud toggle

Alt-0: Texture-map toggle

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SimCity 2000 not required.
Nerves of steel recommended.

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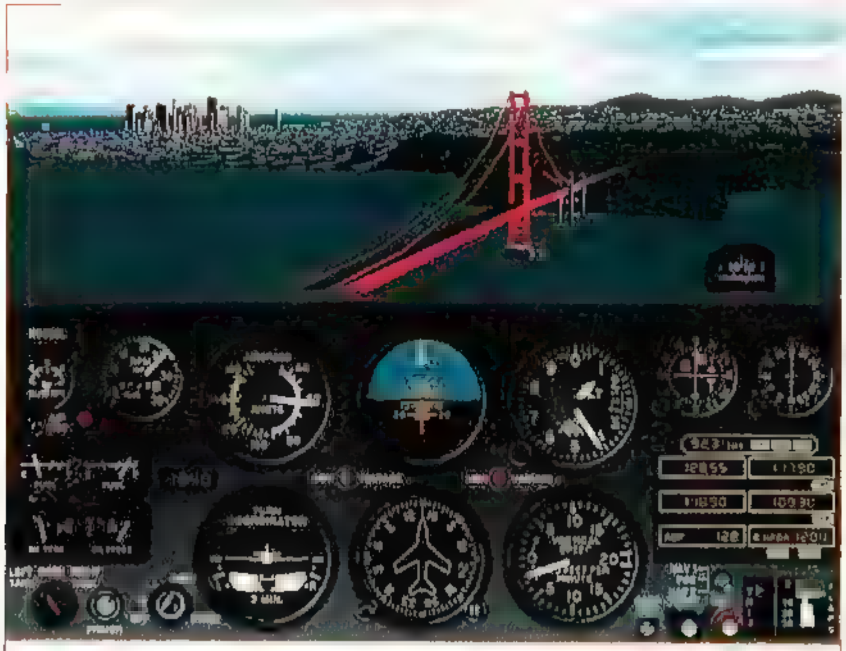
CIRCLE READER SERVICE #173

sive flight models have been further improved. This isn't surprising, since they're being developed by Gary Stottlemeyer, the man who virtually defined the realistic PC flight model with his work on Spectrum HoloByte's FALCON 3.0. The most impressive aspect is how the planes handle damage. Lose part of one of your fabric-covered wings and the plane pulls realistically to that side. Lose a portion of your horizontal stabilizer and you'll find altitude control becomes a real problem.



BAY BUZZ San Francisco is one of 28 fully modeled cities in PRO PILOT; the entire U.S. landscape is available for cross-country flying.

One aspect of the sim that hasn't changed is the dynamic battle environment. RED BARON II features a "living" battlefield that fully simulates everything going on in the air and on the ground for a roughly 15-mile radius around your aircraft. In addition to your own targets, you'll also encounter enemy and allied planes on missions of their own. Nothing is scripted here—you shouldn't ever encounter two missions that are exactly the same.

Most campaign missions will require you to fly to a spot (you'll use a map on your kneeboard and landmarks visible outside the plane to navigate), rendezvous with another element (friendly or enemy), and then perform a mission. You can also modify missions, challenge enemy aces to one-on-one duels, or fly computer-selected single missions.

Look for lots of other nice touches, such as allied aircraft that fire flares when they recognize you coming in for a rendezvous. One very good bit of news: Sierra has heard the cries of frustration with its move to online manuals, and you can look forward to RED BARON II shipping with a thick paper manual packed with historical background on the planes, pilots, and aerial battlefield. The manual's being written by Dennis Kilgore, who was historian and manual author for ACES OF THE DEEP.

FLIGHT SCHOOL

The other sim in development at Dynamix, PRO PILOT, is slated to ship about a month after RED BARON. This civilian simulation puts you in the cockpit of a variety of general aviation aircraft, and is set to give Microsoft's FLIGHT SIMULATOR—which is getting *very* long in the tooth—a real run for the money.

PRO PILOT builds on the civilian simulator experience of SubLogic (which was acquired last year by Sierra) and the improved 3-Space graphics engine created by Dynamix. Like FLIGHT SIMULATOR, you can simply fly around cross-country and enjoy the scenery, and like ATP, you can fly scheduled hops between various airports. But the most impressive feature by far is PRO PILOT's flight training. If all your flying has been virtual and you're anxious to learn more about the real piloting experience, this is the sim for you. Much of the space on the game's two CDs will be taken up by tutorials that teach you real flying and navigation techniques. Although the instruction and time logged isn't "official," it is accurate enough that you'll be well prepared if you ever decide to actually work on a license. After viewing a video on a topic such as constant altitude turns, you'll be able to actually try the maneuver in the air while being coached by an AI flight instructor.

As your flying skills progress, you'll be able to move from the Cessna 172 to a Bonanza, then to the Baron and King Air twins, and finally to a Citation jet.

Of course, if you already have the right stuff, you can skip the tutorials and just fly around. The entire U.S. is available for exploration, with over 27 million accurate altitude maps based on U.S. Geological Service digital elevation maps (so yes, you can make the Grand Canyon run). In addition, every active airport in the U.S. is in place, with proper radio frequencies and instrument landing aids available. There are 28 fully modeled cities, and you'll find generic cities in other populated areas.

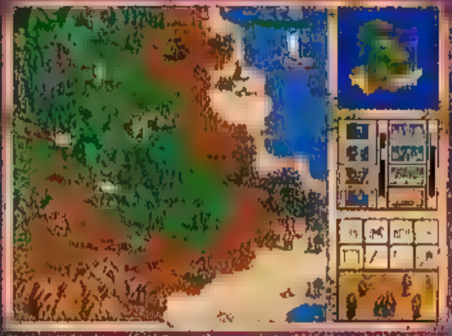
Look for a full range of instrument systems to be modeled, from manifold pressure to an optional Global Positioning System receiver. Each plane has an accurate instrument panel. Views both in and out of the plane are top-notch, a far cry from the EGA ugliness of SubLogic sims or the textured mess of FLIGHT SIMULATOR.

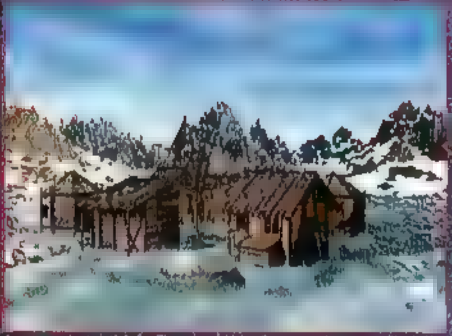
Look for a full-blown preview of PRO PILOT in an upcoming issue of CGW.

THE SEQUEL TO *Heroes of Might and Magic*®

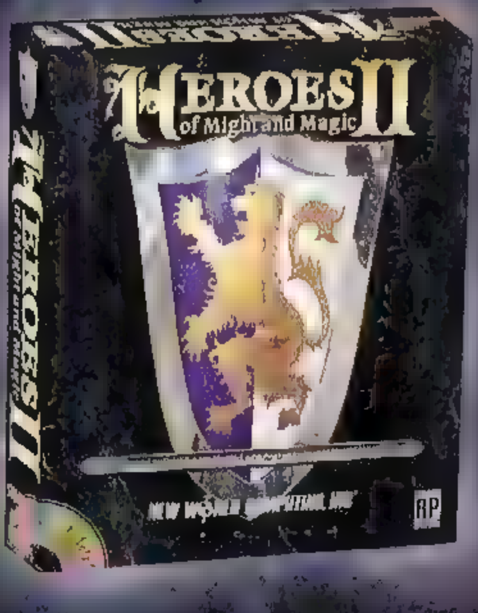
TAKE A STAB AT THE ROYAL THRONE

The king is dead, a civil war rages throughout the countryside, and the people are clamoring for a new leader. Whether you choose to play on the side of good or evil, you can control the greater kingdom if you can muster the courage and skill to take it. This long-awaited sequel is a feature-by-feature enhancement of everything that made the original Heroes an all-time strategy classic. Scores of new hero and monster types, alliance formation for team play, enlarged combat maps, increased multi-player options, and a flexible "World Builder" module are just a few of the reasons why Heroes II will be a prized addition to your CD-ROM treasure trove.





- *Form alliances with friends or the computer.*
- *Multiplayer action for 2-6 players via Internet, modem, or network.*
- *Expanded "interactive" battlefields.*
- *More of everything! Over 60 scenarios, 65 heroes, and 66 monsters. Dozens of new skills, spells and artifacts.*
- *Includes powerful "World Builder" game editor.*
- *Available for Windows® 95 and DOS.*

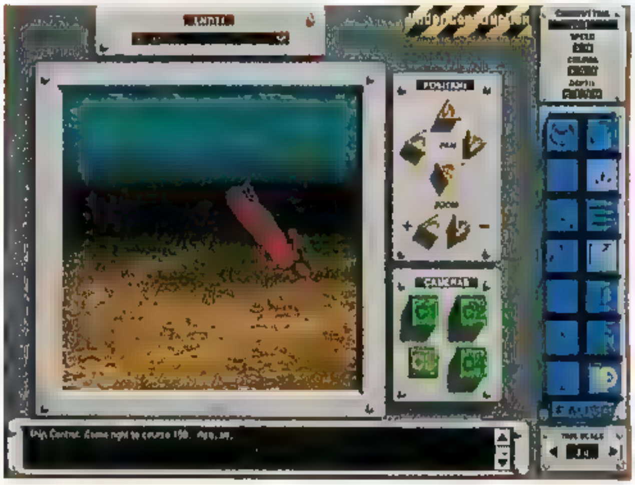


Deeply Qualified

Jane's New Sub Sim Is Better Than Mil Spec

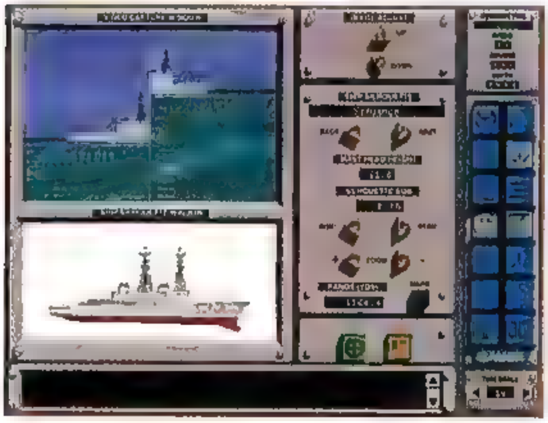
by Denny Atkin

Submarines: the silent service. Wrapped in secrecy throughout the Cold War, the Navy's submerged force is still one of the most classified operations this side of the National Security Agency. However, as the Cold War has waned and the armed services have begun to feel the need for public support in an era of budget cuts, they've opened up a bit about the roles of even their more secret weapons. At the same time, many private companies that have depended on the military for their livelihood have branched out in an effort to make up for waning defense contracts. And as unlikely as it seems, together these changes are leading to the development of one heck of a PC simulation.



ENDGAME A Russian submarine falls victim to an ADCAP (ADvanced CAPability) torpedo. The 3D view is one of the few unrealistic concessions to playability.

Jane's 688 ATTACK SUB 2 combines the knowledge base of the Jane's information library, the game-design experience of Electronic Arts, the simulation-development knowledge of an experienced defense contractor, and the real-world submarine experience of a retired nuclear submarine captain. The result is very likely to be the most realistic submarine simulation you can play without getting a security clearance.



POSITIVE I.D. The stadimeter lets you identify ship classes by comparing a ship's silhouette and masthead height with a stored database.

SOUND FOUNDATIONS

While the project is being helmed by EA's Paul Grace (whose credits include the original 688 ATTACK SUB, SEAWOLF, and Jane's ATF and NATO FIGHTERS), the development work is actually being done by Connecticut-based Sonalysts, Inc. This company has been doing work for the military and industry since 1973 on projects ranging from naval warfare simulations to tactical decision aids dealing with sonar analysis. In recent years, Sonalysts has branched out into a variety of other endeavors, ranging from putting their sonar expertise to work in creating Fish Startle (device that scares fish away from construction sites, power plants, and other dangerous areas) to running full-blown film and recording studios. Now the company has teamed with EA to create a nuclear attack sub simulation.

Most of the members of the project team at Sonalysts have backgrounds in creating simulations for the military. We were able to look at unclassified builds of some of these when visiting Sonalysts' headquarters, and the Target Motion Analysis sim used by the Navy looks very much like TMA screen in 688 ATTACK SUB 2. However, the one in the game actually looks better than the monochrome, wireframe military sim. The military's obviously not as concerned with flash and dazzle as the typical gamer...

Guiding the development team is Sonalysts' Capt. Terry Jones (USN, Ret.). Jones has served as captain of both SSN (nuclear attack) and SSBN (ballistic missile) submarines, and is bringing that experience to the design of the simulation's scenarios. Although some concessions are being made in the name of gameplay—such as the inclusion of external 3D views and the lack of uneventful cruises—the team's background should help 688 ATTACK SUB 2 set new standards for realism.

In fact, early versions were perhaps a bit *too* close to the real thing for the Navy's comfort. When the Pentagon was provided with the first draft of the game's procedural help files, they asked Sonalysts to drop some of the detail, as there was a bit more information about submarine operations there then they wanted available in a computer game.

BATTLE STATIONS

Typical of modern submarine games, you'll be able to operate each of the boat's stations. These include the sonar, fire control, navigation, radio/ESM/comms, and TMA stations, as well as ship control and, of course, the periscope.

Five types of sonar are fully modeled, including narrow- and broad-band, active intercept, active, and Demon (the waterfall display). Actual sampled recordings from an SSN are used for the sonar and other sounds within the game.

One of the more interesting systems modeled is just starting to go into service now on actual submarines. The stadimeter uses a video camera mounted on the boat's periscope to grab an image of a potential target. You input the masthead height of the ship, then compare its silhouette with those stored in the stadimeter. Using this information, you can easily identify the class of ship you're targeting.

One station you won't find on a real submarine, but which is integral to the game, is the viewscreen. This "magic" device has four camera views that let you zoom in on any object in the sea and get a 3D view. Of course, it's not a realistic capability, but who wants to miss the chance to watch a torpedo home in on its target?

The sub modeled is a late-

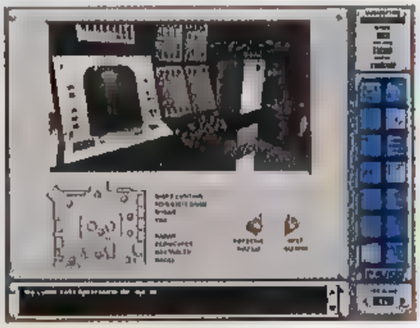
I'm Afraid I Can't Discuss That...

The Navy was kind enough to arrange a visit aboard a real Los Angeles-class attack sub during my visit to Sonalysts. Trekking over with a couple of EA staffers and Sonalysts' subject matter expert Captain Terry Jones to the nearby submarine base in Groton, Connecticut, I was to get a first-hand look at the *USS Alexandria*, SSN 757.

I knew this wasn't going to be a typical tour when I was asked not to photograph the sub's exterior, because its masts were visible. It turns out that much is still classified about the submarine service. Has the 688 class ever seen combat? Other than the already publicly acknowledged Tomahawk missile launches during the Gulf War they can't comment on operations. What are the performance specifications? They can only say that it can go "at least 800 feet" and "at least 25 knots." What kind of countermeasures does the sub use in combat? "A variety of devices." Not to give the impression that the folks aboard the ship weren't cooperative—they treat guests very graciously, going out of their way to show off the ship and answer any unclassified questions. But submariners are definitely still part of a "silent service," with most of the operational details closely held secrets.

THE REAL THING The *USS Alexandria*, SSN 757, prepares to submerge.

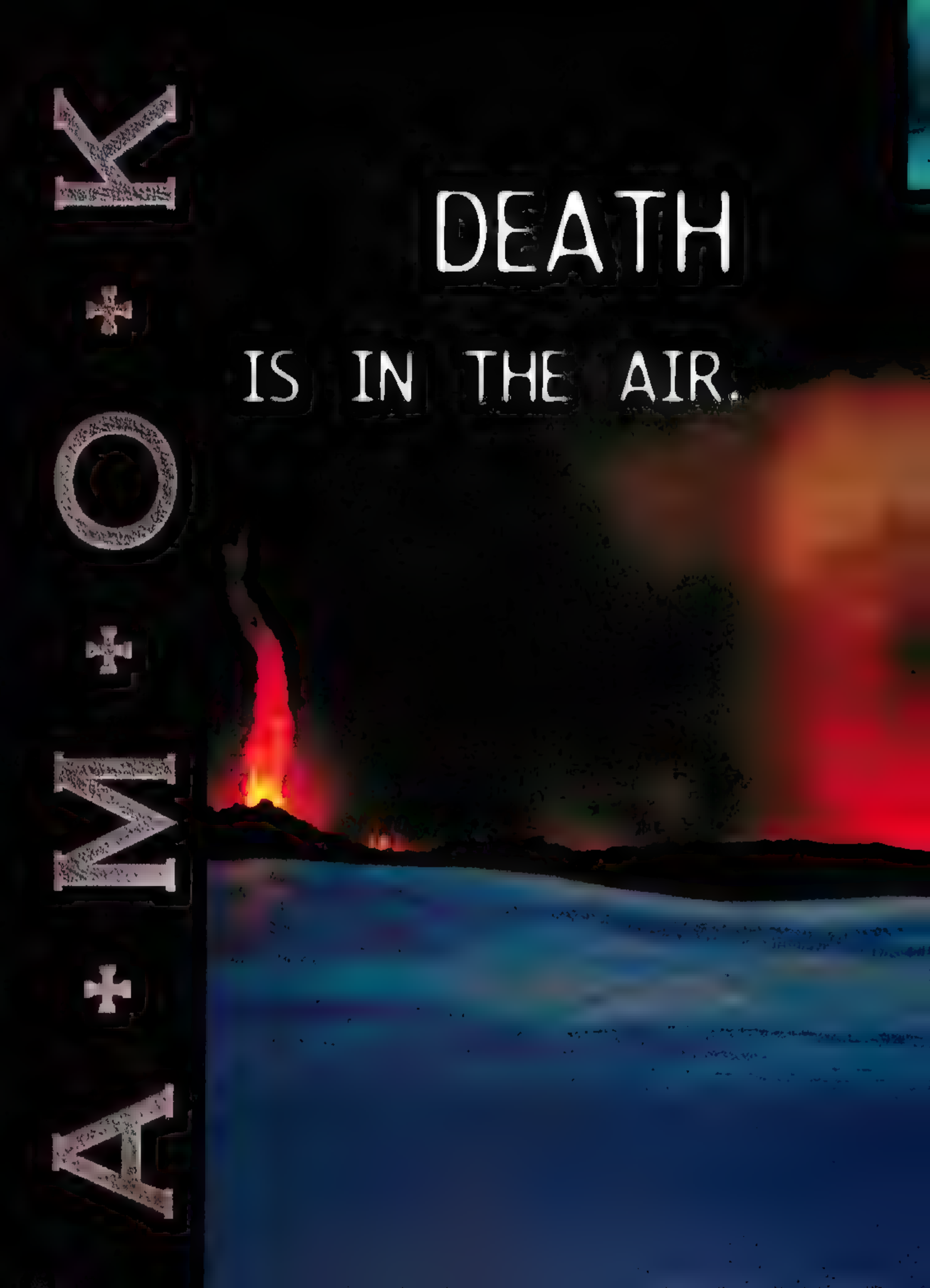
If you've ever visited a cramped World War II submarine at a museum, you might think the modern *Alexandria* spacious. That is, until you remember that there are 138 people sharing the space on the boat, and that it often goes over a month—or months—without surfacing. The crew's mess is probably smaller than your grandmother's dining room. One small washer and a dryer handle laundry for the entire ship.



BATTLE STATIONS The ship's control room is laid out just like the real thing.

As we toured the ship, I saw that the Sonalysts team had done their homework modeling the sonar waterfall displays, fire-control panels, and control room. Many control panels are covered up when visitors are aboard, but what we were able to see was an interesting mix of technology ranging from a modern NEC computer monitor displaying an error about a failed SCSI boot device, to dials to levers and dials that would look at home on a 1950s-era submarine. Despite the sophistication of today's subs, the dangerous environment they work in makes the use of proven technology wise. So although "fly by wire" technologies could very likely be fairly easily adapted to allow all a sub's maneuvering to be conducted from a single station, even today's most modern subs still alter their speed by signaling crewmembers in the engine room.

We left the submarine with an even greater admiration for the men who protect America's interest at sea. To spend weeks, even months, cooped up in such close quarters, working six hours and taking 12 off, takes amazing dedication, stamina, and patience. If you want to truly live the submarine experience when playing 688 Attack Sub 2, try cramming about 28 people in your computer nook while you play.



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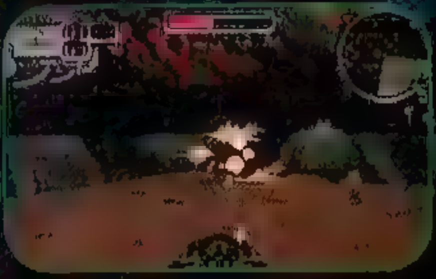

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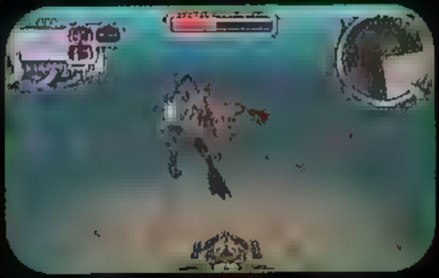

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PC CD-ROM

TEEN

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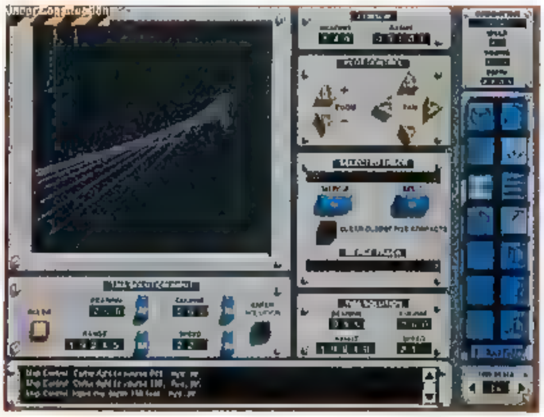
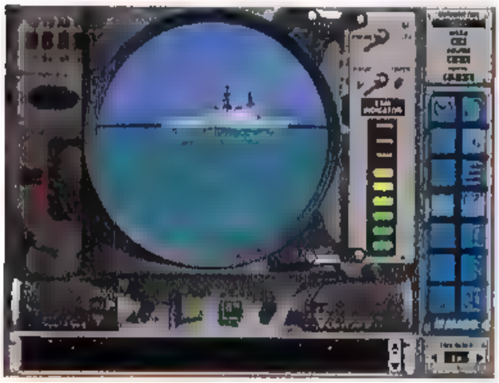


LOCAL MOTION The Target Motion Analysis station helps you identify a ship's bearing, course, and speed

model *Los Angeles*–class boat equipped with four torpedo tubes and 12 vertical launch tubes. At your disposal you'll find MK 48 ADCAP torpedoes, as well as Harpoon and Tomahawk missiles. Targeting all of these devices is realistically complicated, but you can get an assist from your crew if you like.

You can run the entire sub single-handedly, but the only station you really must operate is fire control. AI crewmembers can run each of the other stations, analyzing sonar returns, identifying targets, and plotting solutions on enemy ships. As your crew gains experience, they'll move through four levels of AI which allow them to perform their duties faster and more accurately. At the end of each tour, you'll be given the opportunity to "trade in" experienced crew members. For instance, if you're a whiz at sonar but you stink at using the TMA station, you might trade in your top-level sonar operator for a better AI TMA technician. Then in combat you can analyze the sonar returns yourself and let the computer handle TMA.



SCOPING IT OUT The periscope is more difficult to use in rough seas, when waves will often wash over your view.

Sonalysts has implemented enemy AI based on routines developed for their naval training experience. As you get better, enemy AI will buff up in order to provide a greater threat. Because the AI adjusts to your level of success, it should be challenging, but never overwhelmingly impossible to beat.

MISSION ORDERS

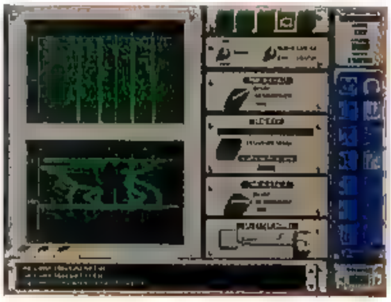
In addition to a number of single missions and 10 training scenarios, 688 ATTACK SUB 2 features 14 campaign scenarios. You'll start in the Caribbean, where you'll undertake missions near Cuba and Colombia. Some of these have a Tom Clancy book feel, such as one where you're tasked with dropping a seal team near a drug lord's boat. Your second tour will be in the Mediterranean/Adriatic, where you'll conduct operations off Bosnia and Libya. From there it's off to the coast of Iran, and finally to the North Pacific, where you'll face your most difficult tasks, battling elements of a confrontational Russian force.

The sim includes a mission editor which uses a NOAA topography database of all the world's oceans and seas to let you create missions in any region. A wide variety of ground, sea, and air units are available, so you can build engagements against subs, task forces, and land targets.

And you're not limited to playing alone. Multiplayer scenarios are supported, with up to eight players on a network, each captaining a different sub. You can play sub vs. sub, or create missions in the mission editor. You might task one group of submarines with escorting a convoy that another is trying to destroy, for instance.

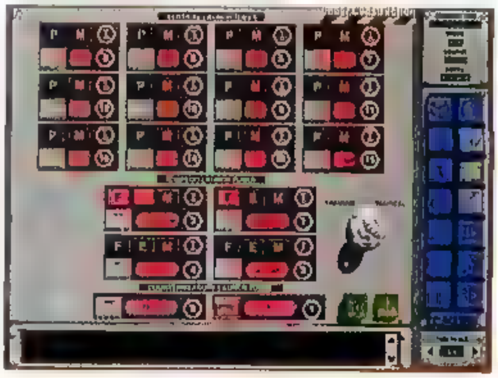
NON-QUAL PUKES

When a submariner first comes aboard he has to earn his dolphins—the pin that signifies he's qualified in submarine operations. Until that point, he's considered a "non-qual puke." 688 ATTACK SUB will include extremely detailed online help covering all aspects of sub operations (this was the section that had to be toned down to please the Pentagon), so you should be able to earn your virtual dolphins fairly quickly. Of course, the sim will also be packed with reference information from *Jane's Fighting Ships*.

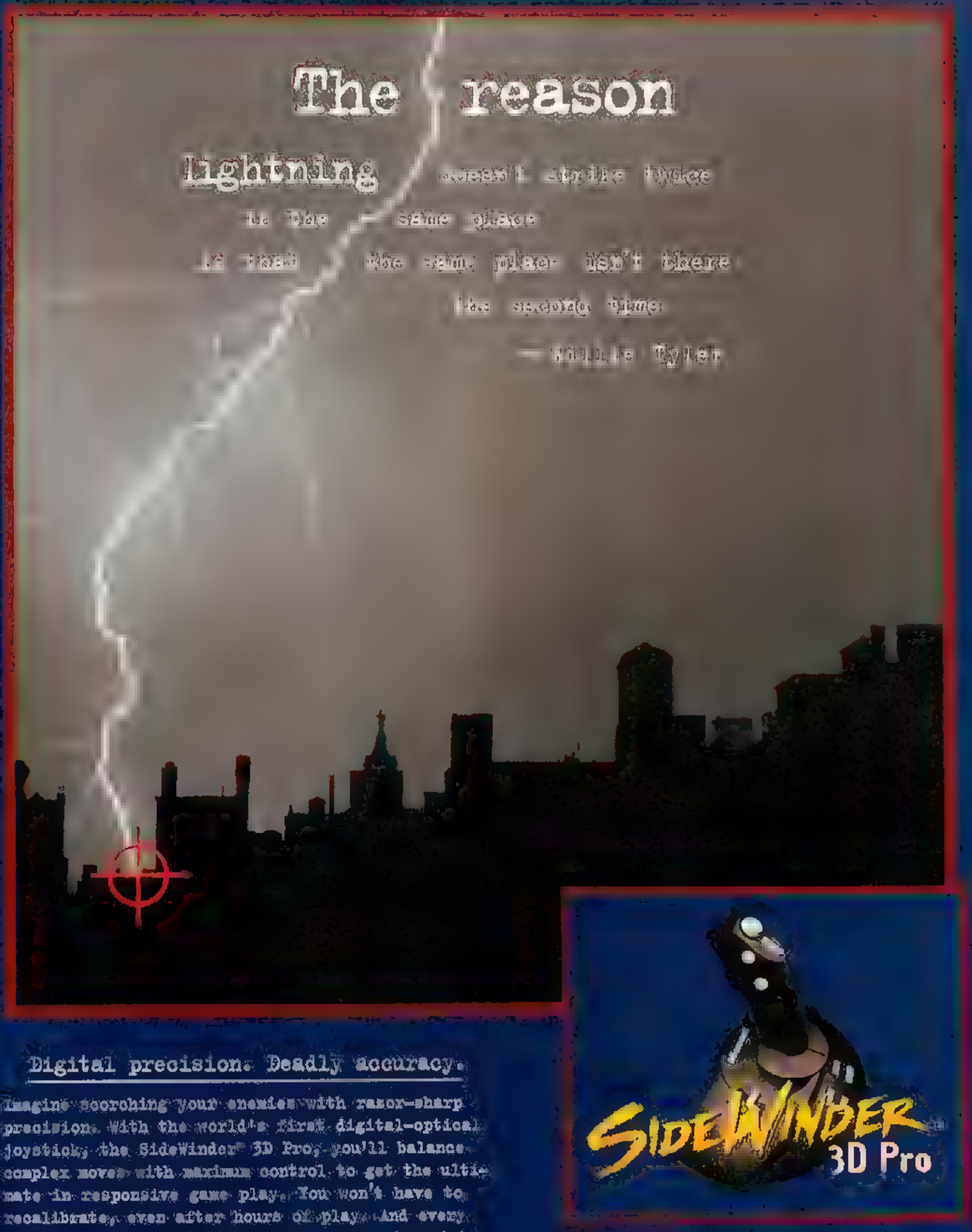


REAR VIEW Checking for targets behind the ship using the towed array: five sonar modes are realistically modeled.

If you played the original 688 ATTACK SUB or SEAWOLF, don't look for the same kind of gaming experience here. You won't find chases through deep-water chasms or subs that can do 60 knots here. The late alpha version I examined indicated that 688 ATTACK SUB 2 will sport unprecedented levels of authenticity. You should be able to plunge into the game and see for yourself sometime in March.



ARSENAL OF DOOM With 12 vertical and four horizontal launch tubes, a *Los Angeles*–class attack sub is a force to be reckoned with.


The reason lightning doesn't strike twice in the same place is that the same place isn't there the second time.
— Willie Tyler
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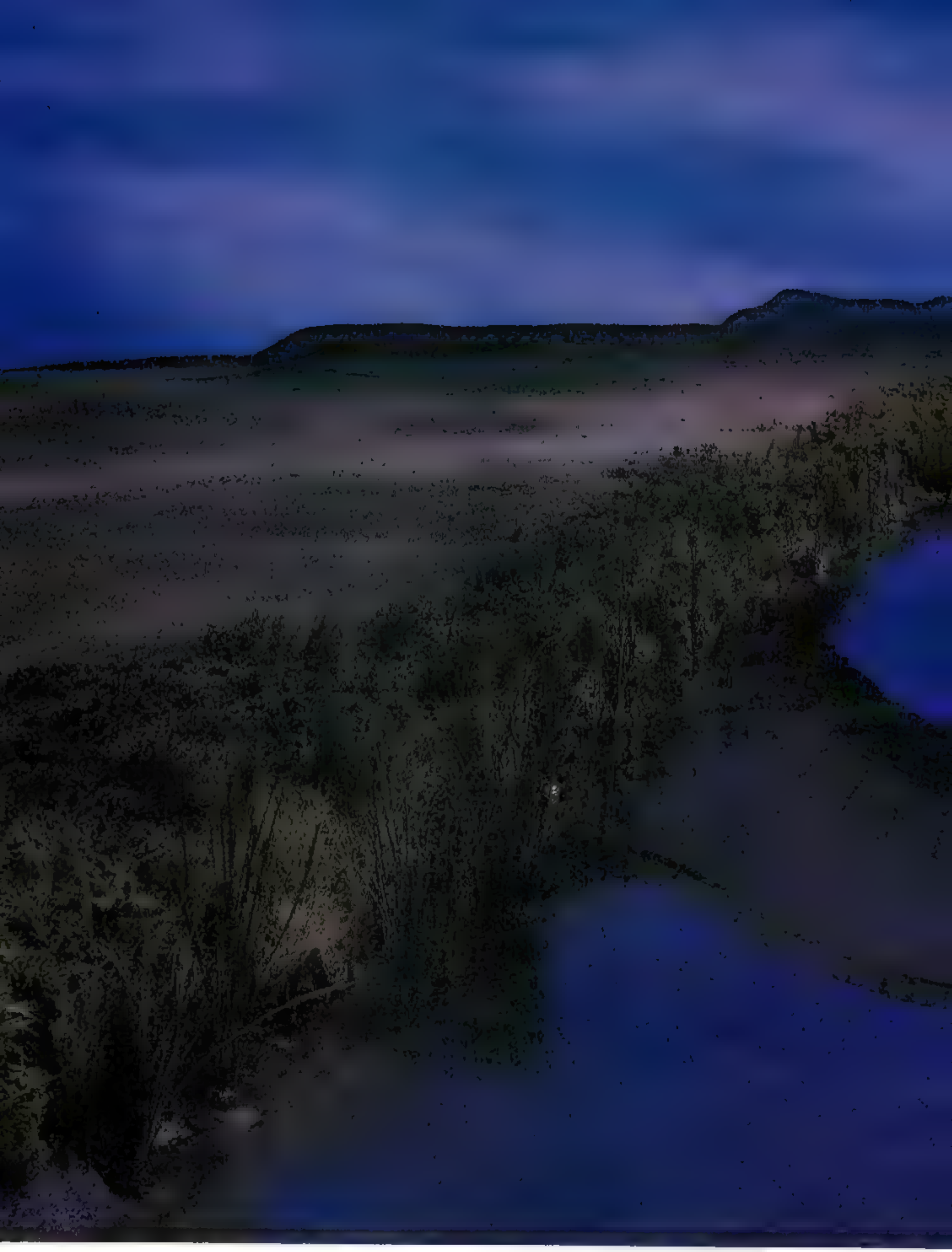

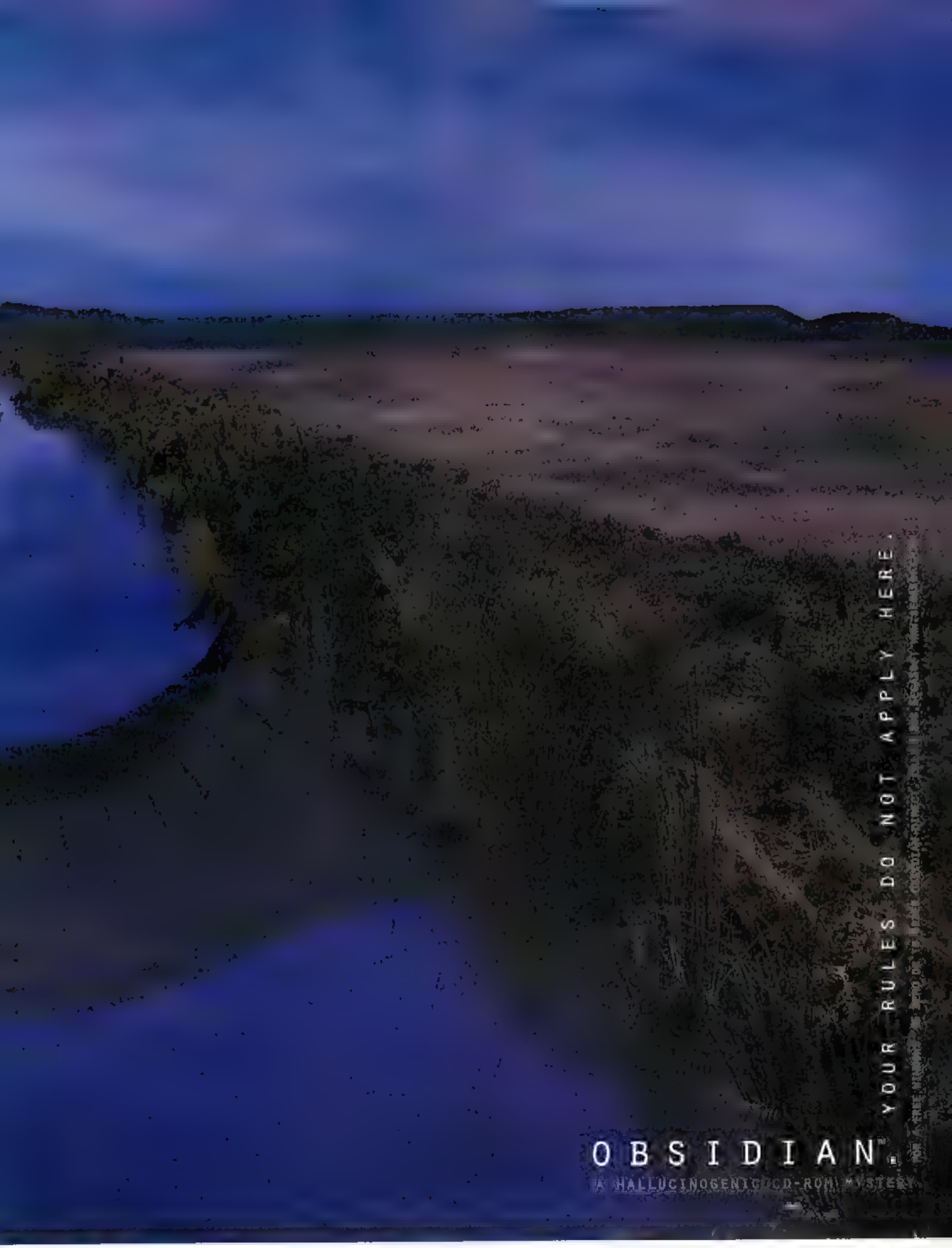
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DIFFICULTY LEVEL INTERMEDIATE

Deadly Blades

Russia's Notorious Chopper Proves A Worthy Apache Adversary

by John Nolan

You're blitzing along 30 meters above the Kazakstan turf with the HUD showing 300 kilometers per hour. The steady whopping of the rotor blades is urgently interrupted by the Russian-accented voice of your Weapons Systems Officer: "Zed Ess Yew 23 Treeple A!" Simultaneously the gun pipper slews hard right in the HUD and you bank the big gunship to follow it. Rolling out with the pipper centered in the HUD, you see big, deadly fireflies arcing up at you from the rebel ZSU-23. Dumping a handful of collective lets the tracers pass harmlessly overhead. Finally in range, a quick three-second burst from the turret gun solves the problem. As you center the waypoint caret to get back on course, you drop down even lower. That was a bit close. Welcome to Hind, comrade; it's going to be a long enlistment!

Price: $49.95

System Requirements: 486DX/66, 8 MB RAM (16 MB for Win 95 version), 15 MB hard drive space (50 MB recommended), local bus SVGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM drive, DOS 5.0 or higher; supports most major sound cards.

# of Players: 1-16 (IPX network)

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designer: Digital Integration

Publisher: Interactive Magic, Research Triangle Park, NC (800) 298-0872

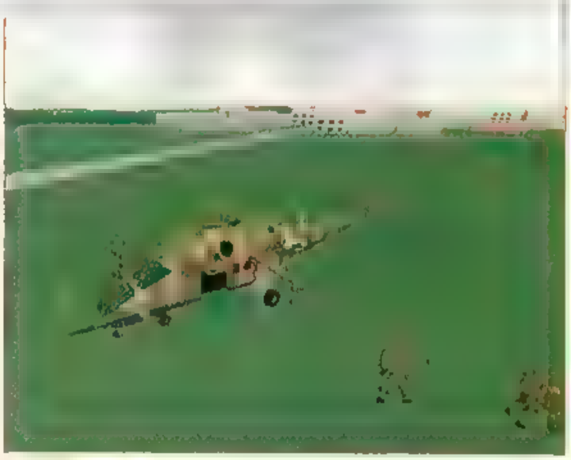
Reader Service #: 334

GUNSHIP DEPLOYMENT

To create Hind, Digital Integration followed the successful blueprint from last year's Apache flight sim. There's a Quickstart option that jumps you right into action in Arcade or Invulnerable modes. It's a great way to gain basic familiarity with the sim, thanks to simplified controls and unlimited ammo.

After you tire of blasting everything that moves, you can progress to the Training area. Here you'll learn to handle the Mil Mi-24V Hind E using a more realistic flight model. Twenty missions will thoroughly indoctrinate you in assault helicopter operations and effective weapons employment. If you desire further flight experience before beginning a campaign, there are self-contained combat missions. There are 10 missions in each of three different theaters of operation: Kazakstan, Korea, and Afghanistan.

The campaign missions take place in these theaters as well. Each of the three campaigns is a multilevel, multimission scenario where your overall success depends on the outcome of interlinked combat missions. There are approximately 20 missions in each campaign. With this variety depth, it will take you quite a while to exhaust all the possibilities.



SPECIAL DELIVERY These crack airborne assault troops hate to walk; sight on the waypoint or they won't get out of the Hind!

If dueling with the computer becomes routine, the lure of multiplayer combat awaits. You can link computers via modem, serial cable, or network. Two-player options include Combat, Single Mission, and Pilot/WSO. Combat is a head-to-head duel in Korea. Single Mission operates as a flight of two Hinds on a single mission in any combat zone; it also allows Hind-versus-Apache combat in Korea. Pilot/WSO pairs you up in both seats of a Hind to fly any single mission in any combat area.

Hind supports play over an IPX network for up to 16 players. There are two network games available: Death Match and Capture the Flag. Death Match can be played as a free-for-all or with teams, with simple survival as the goal. Capture the Flag requires you to destroy the enemy HQ. Hind is designed to easily couple with Apache, allowing dissimilar air combat in any of the multiplayer modes. Interactive Magic says that both helicopter sims will also link with the company's upcoming F-16 simulation.

HIND SIGHT

Hind's Preferences menu is a key factor for getting the most out of the game. Here you can adjust visual detail to get the best performance from your system. Maximum detail includes Gouraud shading, texture-mapping, light sourcing, and maximum visual range. Of course, the usable level of detail depends on your computer. Too much detail on a slow computer results in a jerky, non-flyable presentation, especially in realistic flight mode. Reducing in-flight sound effects may allow a higher visual complexity. Tested on a 486/100 with 16 MB and a Stealth 2200 video card, Hind played smoothly just above midway on the detail slider, using full in-flight sound. Graphics still look good at this setting. A P-133 with 16 MB of RAM and a Stealth 3D card had absolutely no difficulty running maximum visual complexity. While the graphics look excellent at this setting, they're somewhat dated in comparison with other recent sims. Both Win 95 and DOS executables are included; they're essentially identical in features and performance.

Budding chopper pilots have a choice of three flight models. Novice is the arcade mode, and requires minimal skill

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PLANETARY CONQUEST
Big Red racing
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MAP
Terminal Velocity
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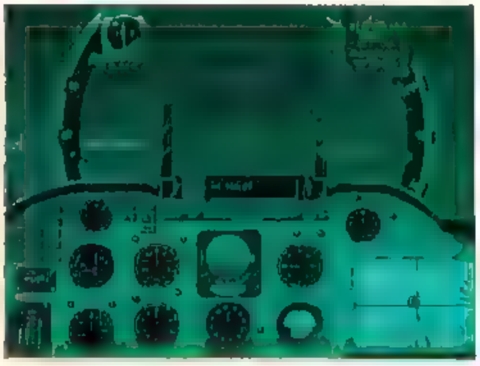
CIRCLE READER SERVICE #362

to operate. The Realistic mode is a good simulation of helicopter handling. Control cross-coupling is a major part of this model, requiring you to adjust other controls if you make a change in any single control. Stable mode basically deletes cross-coupling and a few advanced effects from the Realistic model. It's not that difficult to fly in Realistic mode, but landings will require some practice and skill due to the cross-coupling. Realistic is the way to go; accept the challenge.

Enemy intelligence is also adjustable. When set to a higher difficulty, the enemy reacts to your presence earlier, becomes highly aggressive, and shoots with much greater accuracy. At the lowest setting, the enemy is a dolt and you'll triumph easily. At midpoint, you'll have your hands full staying alive. At the maximum rating, you're going to feel like a fresh T-bone steak dropped into a pool of piranhas. Start just below the mid setting so you don't get discouraged too soon!



NIGHT RIDER The FLIR view lets you home in on your target, even in the dead of night.

APACHE REDUX?

By now veterans of Interactive Magic's earlier APACHE sim (just re-released in a Windows 95 version) are wondering if they haven't been here and done this. HIND is not a revolutionary new helicopter simulation. It's an evolutionary sequel to APACHE, albeit one with enough distinctive features to make it an excellent sim in its own right.

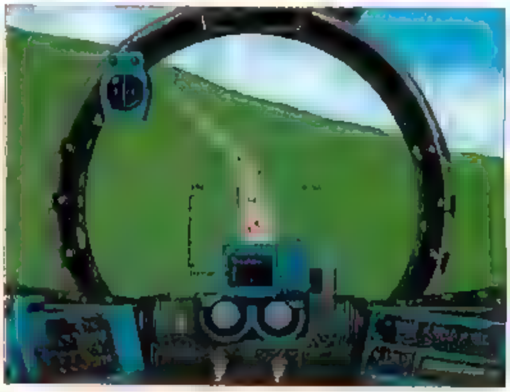
The game format, graphics, and most missions are similar to its predecessor, although newly added troop-carrying, reconnaissance, and bombing missions add variety to the mix.

APACHE veterans will find that the lumbering Hind flies quite differently from the nimble Army helicopter. But perhaps the biggest difference in this game comes from its use of intelligent ground troops. In addition to the usual tanks, bridges, and other man-made targets, you'll encounter groups of individual humans—some of whom turn to point shoulder-launched SAMs at your helicopter.

Other nice touches include facilities for reloading weapons during a mission (when not deploying or evacuating troops), and the ability to issue commands to your wingman or the whole formation in both single and multiplayer modes.

Although HIND feels in some ways like the 1995 game it's based on, the addition of ground troops makes it a simulation experience that's unique in today's market.

(When he's not skimming the mountains in ex-Soviet hardware, John Nolan is a pilot for a major U.S. airline. Many years ago, his flying time as pilot broke into the five-digit numbers.)



WINDOW SEAT The WSO cockpit provides an excellent view, as well as access to the helmet-mounted sight

[illegible]

HIND's computer AI is fine, but nothing beats the thrill of turning your buddy into a smoking heap of spare helicopter parts. Owners of the original DOS version of APACHE may have been frustrated by that game's problems with network and modem play. If you have this version, you can visit the I-Magic Web site at http://www.imagicgames.com and pick up a patch. Go to the Technical Support section and download APCHPCH2.EXE. This will allow your game to link with HIND or the newer APACHE Win 95 for head-to-head play.

HIND and the updated APACHE already have this improved two-player and network capability. The interface is quite simple, and worked flawlessly when we used it in modem play. Detailed setup and troubleshooting instructions are included in the manual, but it's almost a no-brainer to configure.

My old college roommate and I, both ex-USAF fixed-wing jockeys, spent a few hours tying up the phone lines with HIND and APACHE. We tried all the options, flying as Hind wingmen on single missions, as a Pilot/WSO combination, and in head-to-head combat. Of course, the heavy favorite was the combat option. The other two choices just don't provide the adrenal rush of trying to wipe out your human opponent.

The one drawback of the two-player mode was the inability to adjust your gunship's weapons load-out. The Apache has a definite advantage over the Hind in agility and technology. On the other hand, the Hind has heavy armor and air-to-air missiles. Unfortunately, our Hinds never had the R60 air-to-air missiles on board.

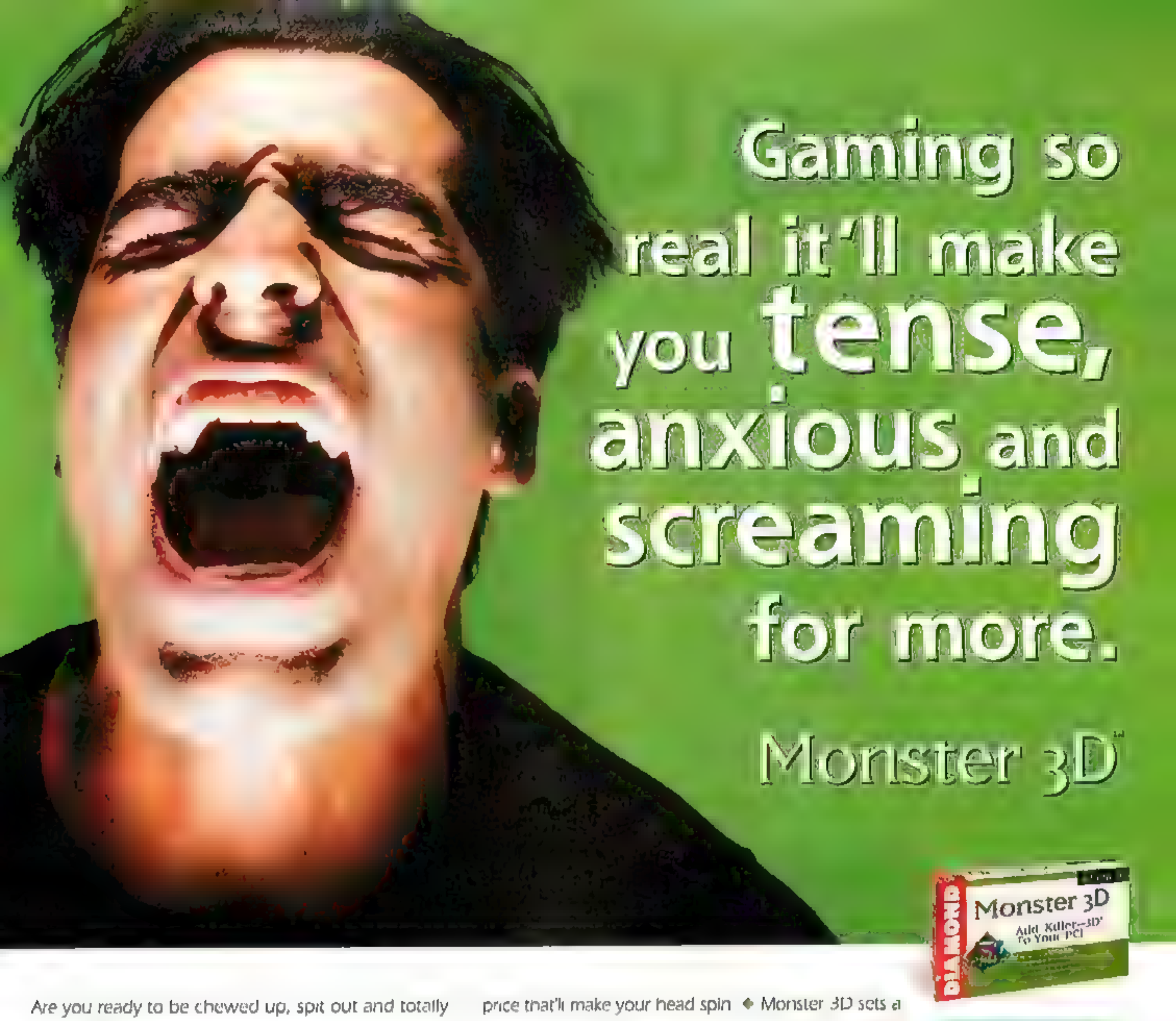
The two-player capability makes the game. If you don't already have a dedicated phone line for your computer, it's time to order one. It'll keep your significant other from trying to strangle you with the phone cord!

›APPEAL: Sim enthusiasts looking for a war that's up close and personal; APACHE addicts looking for a new fix.

›PROS: Good flight modeling; ground troops add needed variety and realism to the rotary-wing genre. Reliable and fun modem play.

›CONS: Many missions are very similar to those found in APACHE; somewhat dated graphics engine.

CG RATED ★★★★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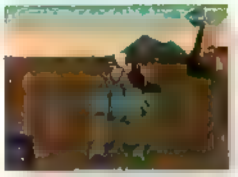

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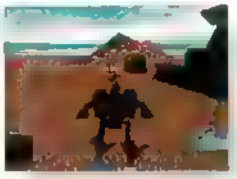

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #385

★★½

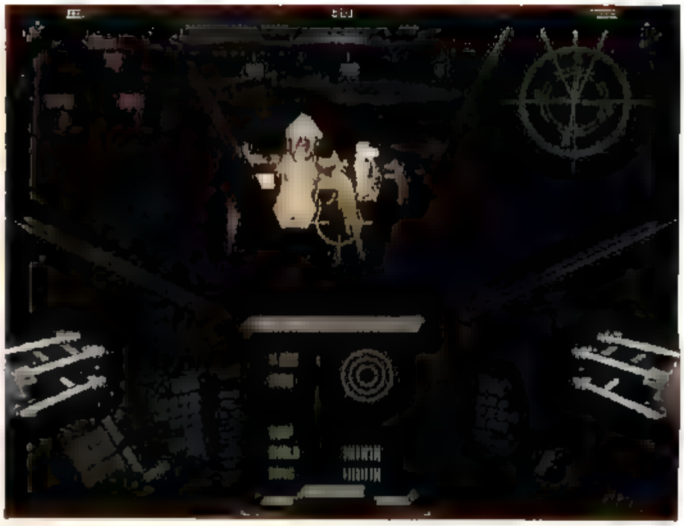
DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY

Bug Lite

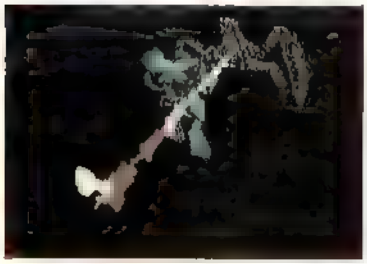
SHATTERED STEEL Simplifies Mechanized Mercenary Mayhem

by Thierry Nguyen

With the popularity of giant-robot warfare among computer gamers, you start to wonder when we'll see *MechWarrior: The Movie*, or news that General Dynamics is launching production of the first M2000A1 Here battalion for the U.S. Army. While it's unlikely we'll ever see giant robots on the battlefield, they're invading our PCs in droves. The latest effort, Interplay's SHATTERED STEEL, is targeted squarely at the giant robot pilot recruit who's looking for a little less simulation and a lot more hyper-action.



YOU'RE A SCORPIO? Scorpitrons are some of the uglier Tergs, but this ain't a beauty contest.



CLASH OF THE TITANS Your 27-ton Shiva (your biggest Runner) must take on this massive Mantis in the final mission.

Price: $19.95

System Requirements: IBM compatible 486-66 or better (Pentium 75 or better recommended), 8 MB RAM (16 MB RAM recommended), 20 MB hard drive space, VGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM (4x CD-ROM recommended), 16-bit sound card.

# of Players: 1-16 (IPX network)

Protection: None (CD must be in drive)

Designer: BioWare

Publisher: Interplay Irvine, CA (800) 468-3775

Reader Service #: 336

EVIL INSECTOID INVASION

In SHATTERED STEEL, you're a mercenary contracted by a corporation to investigate a routine disturbance. Landing on the planet's surface, you're greeted by a swarm of giant, robotic insects instead of the tanks and robots you were expecting. With the truth revealed, you embark on a campaign to liberate two planets from a foul alien menace, dubbed the Tergs in honor of their discoverer.

It's a relief to find aliens as the main enemy in SHATTERED STEEL. Instead of fighting humans or maniacal AIs piloting variations of the same vehicle you're in, you have to determine the best ways to defeat enemies such as giant robotic spiders and scorpions. These guys definitely don't fight the same way you do. As the game progresses, you will gradually gain information about the Tergs, an alien menace worth developing further in future installments of the game.

VOXEL VIOLENCE

SHATTERED STEEL's most striking feature is its beautiful graphics engine. All the robots and buildings are gorgeously texture-mapped and strikingly lit. Their movement is quite fluid — the game is much smoother at 640x480 resolution with texture-mapping enabled than its competitor, MECHWARRIOR 2: MERCENARIES.

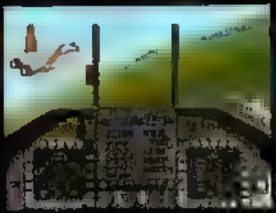
A unique addition to this genre is Voxel-rendered terrain. The landscape is filled with rolling hills and deep trenches, and you can use these terrain features to your advantage. Run behind a hill to mask your Runner from enemy fire, or lure an enemy into a trench and use your superior position to pummel them from above. Terrain-utilization tactics take on even better definition once you find out you can alter the terrain via mortars or nukes.

Terrain is also used to advantage in SHATTERED STEEL's multiplayer modes. In addition to the typical Anarchy (deathmatch) and team games, there's also a full 20-mission campaign designed specifically for multiplay. Two opposing teams face each other, and each side has a specific goal in each mission. It's good to see the multiplayer scenarios treated as more than just a chance to blast your friends mindlessly.

Amidst the great robotic insect graphics, rolling terrain, and network play lies an interface simpler than that found in SHATTERED STEEL's giant robot brethren. Gameplay seems to favor the keyboard/mouse combo, using the keyboard for body movement and the mouse for head movement. Joystick input is also available, but I didn't find it as effective as the keyboard/mouse. An unfortunate control omission is the lack of a variable throttle. You always move at full speed, and it boils ming soon for Windows®95

REACH OUT AND TORCH SOMEONE.

F/A-18 HORNET



The hottest flight simulator game is now torching up your Windows® 95 PC. It's F/A-18 Hornet. With incredible 3-D graphics and realistic instrumentation, it'll push you to the outer limits then bring you screaming back to earth. In fact, F/A-18 Hornet closely simulates the Navy's own attack-fighter aircraft. There's 28 different Persian Gulf combat missions to test your skills — where you can blow up everything from ammunition depots using the M61 Vulcan cannon to MIG fighters with an AIM9 Sidewinder. So pick up the award winning F/A-18 Hornet today. It's the best way to get close to someone.

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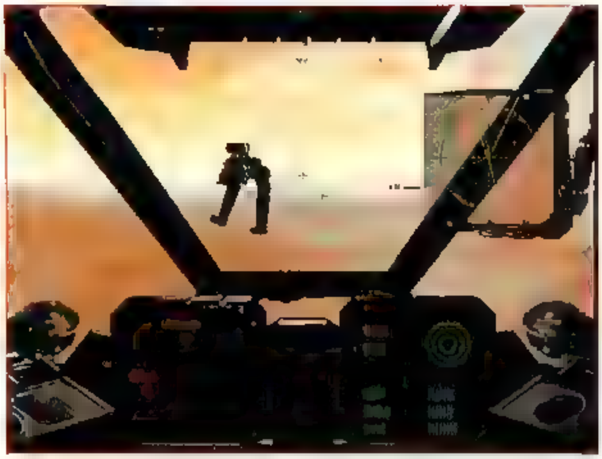


WHO GOES THERE? In multiplayer missions, your radar and the name of the Runner are the signs of whether he is a friend or a foe.

down to either moving forward or not moving; you can't "cut throttle" to 50 percent, for instance.

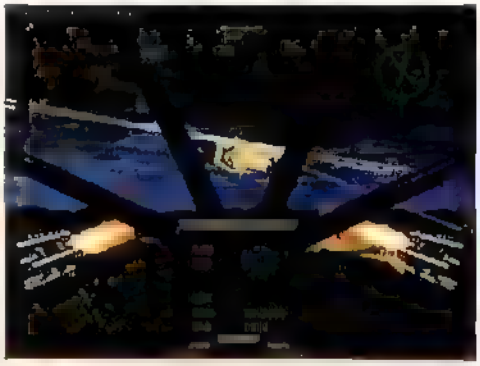
The game is of a simpler breed than the likes of MechWarrior 2 or EarthSiege 2. While the terrain has hills and trenches to mess around with, that's all they are: hills and trenches. There are no trees or bodies of water here. (Even if Ghost Bear's Legacy's trees looked like toothpicks, at least there were trees.) Also, while you do have wingmen and allies, you have no control over them. They just move around and do their own thing. Perhaps the least "simulation-like" aspect of the game is the ability to pick up and replace weapons on the battlefield, just like the power-ups in Doom.

QUIRKS AND QUIBBLES

You'll need the help of the power-ups, though, in some of the game's tougher missions. Unfortunately, single-player missions are of very uneven quality, ranking from ridiculously easy to nigh impossible. The impossible ones usually have you defending an object, which is hard to do when 20 or more Tergs come swarming at you. You usually need to learn a "trick" to winning a specific mission. Also, while the game appears to offer branching missions, the only real difference is difficulty or which new weapons you may get. Some threads are merely detours, and you quickly end up back on the same mission track.

The initial release of this game had a major, and rather strange, bug. While Shattered Steel is a DOS game, the first version wouldn't run properly under MS-DOS, and had to be launched from a Windows 95 DOS prompt. If you try to play under MS-DOS, you will likely get a CD-ROM read error when you load the Holoprojector for a briefing. The problem has been traced to the DOS CD driver, and a patch was created to correct it. Even with the patch, though, there are still some quirks when running under DOS, so you'd better plan on having Windows 95 on your system if you want to play this game.

Quirks aside, Shattered Steel is a decent first effort with enough unique features to make it worth a look for fans of the genre. The game's longevity should be helped by a mission builder module soon to be released by Bioware, and there's a possibility of a mission disc as well—either of which has the potential to address the inaccessibility of some single-player missions. But if Interplay wants to provide serious competition for the MechWarrior series, the company needs to provide more freedom and variety in the overall game.



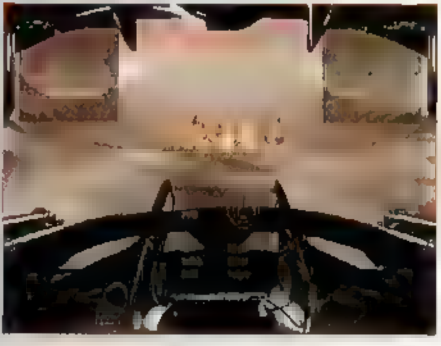
GO YOUR OWN WAY Wingmen and allies have decent AI, which is a good thing, since you can't control them

[illegible]

The preferred primary weapons are the Gatling guns. Lasers are fine, but unless your energy recharge is on maximum, those 50 shots run out fast. The Gatling guns are limited to 750 shots, but if you follow Corporal Hicks' advice from *Aliens* and fire in short, controlled bursts, the guns should be adequate for the mission. If you do run out of ammo, chances are you can scrounge for an energy weapon out on the field.

Guided missiles and mortars are the best secondary weapons. Guided missiles (IR or Radar) can take care of any air units, letting you concentrate on the ground grunts. The mortars are great—if you aim correctly, you can make giant pits in the landscape and trap enemies in them.

Finally, an effective combat tactic, when using the keyboard for movement and the mouse for head control, is to aim your head to the side with the mouse and circle your enemy while firing inward.



TILL THEY GLOW The nuke is a devastating weapon, creating a large crater filled with fire and all that other Terg-killing stuff.

▸APPEAL: Wannabe giant robot pilots who care more about action than lore.

▸PROS: Beautiful graphics and realistic terrain, great multiplayer missions, creative alien opponents.

▸CONS: Uneven mission difficulty, only runs reliability under Windows 95 despite being an MS-DOS game.

CG RATED ★★

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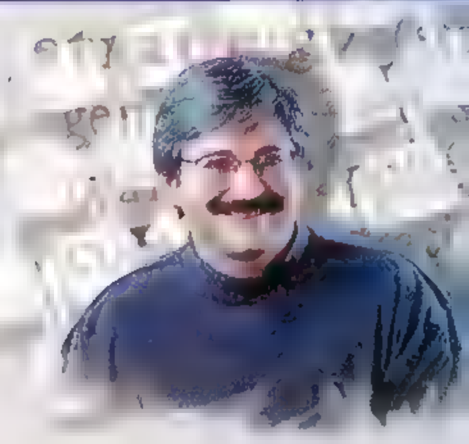
Greybeard Goebbels

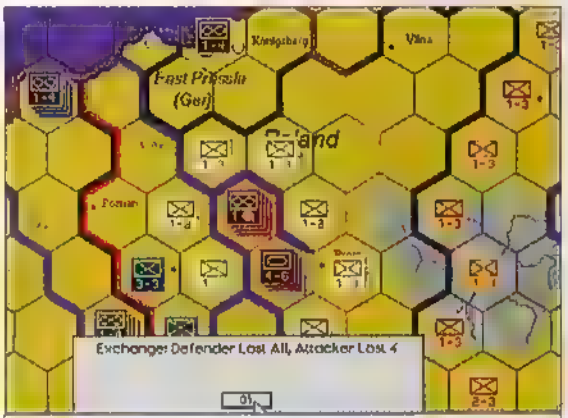


The Latest Third Reich *Conversion Is Hardly Der Reich Stuff*

by Terry Coleman

In the early '70s, board wargame sales were quickly building into a multimillion-dollar business. Tactical games were all the rage, with Jim Dunnigan's *Panzerblitz* (one of the only strategy boardgames to top a quarter million units in sales) spawning dozens of imitators. In 1974 (the same eventful year that brought us *Dungeons & Dragons*), there emerged a most unlikely hero, who bucked this trend with a complex grand strategic game. John Prados—who now makes his living writing best-selling books on the CIA's secret wars—has always been fascinated with the political and economic aspects of modern warfare. While his games on Vietnam (*Year of the Rat*) and the Civil War (*The Campaigns of Robert E. Lee*) were filled with great ideas, they were often so tedious as to cloud any insights into the conflicts they covered. With *Third Reich*, however, Prados' eccentricities were channeled into productive design systems by the Avalon Hill development team, which, led by Don Greenwood, was simply the best set of "game polishers" of their era.

Whether viewed on cardboard or computer screen, *Third Reich* is a profoundly complex and yet curiously abstracted view of the European theater of WWII from 1939 to 1945—a sort of military/geopolitical/grand strategic amalgamation that could keep Clausewitz himself busy for a long, long time. You must spend Basic Resource Points—BRPs, affectionately known as "burps"—for everything from gearing up your economy to building units to declaring war on an enemy. What little tactical flavor there is comes from the superiority of armor, and from the paratroops, units of such Herculean power that you feel they could have taken Crete—or for that matter, Norway—virtually unsupported.



Exchange: Defender Lost All, Attacker Lost 4

POLISH KNOCKWURST Poland is a puzzle. To solve it, use your air units to soften the opposition, then open a path to Warsaw for your armor to break through. Note how the Soviet units are ready to move into Poland from the East, just as they did historically.

The units themselves, however, are cookie-cutter. German units are 4-6s, naval units are 9s, and so on, with little variation, the rationale being that techno-

> No one familiar with the boardgame will be happy with the compromises made to the original design.

BRIEFINGS

▶If you're still looking for a last-minute gaming gift, you might consider *Dixie* from Columbia Games. It's—brace yourself—a card game, but it's the fastest-playing Civil War battle game you'll see this year. Dixie is only slightly more involved than playing MAGIC: THE GATHERING, and the rules are more internally consistent. There are cards for creeks, ridges, and other dominant terrain, with special rules for hidden fords, enfilade, and morale. The leaders and units depicted run from the inept Don Carlos Buell to Ulysses S. Grant and the legendary Stonewall Brigade. For about $20 (for two decks, one Rebel and one Union, at $10 apiece) you can be reenacting Shiloh, Bull Run, or Gettysburg with a friend in half an hour. Columbia Games, P.O. Box 3457, Blaine, WA, 98231, (800) 363-3631, **www.columbiagames.com**

BRIEFINGS

▸Add-on packs are a dime a dozen these days, but there are a couple worth your time this winter season. W!ZONE is not BEYOND THE DARK PORTAL, but it does have Blizzard's blessing, along with 50 new WARCRAFT II scenarios. Trafalgar and Island Hop (complete with oil slicks!) are a nice change of pace, and Constantinople will appeal to any last-stand enthusiast. Wizardworks, PC-CD, $29.95, (800) 229-2714, **www.wizworks.com**

▸SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION II SCENARIOS, on the other hand, were designed by MicroProse (specifically Mick Uhl), and are pretty solid throughout. The ancient scenarios leave RISE AND RULE OF THE ANCIENT WORLD in the dust, and there are some new items, such as enhanced spices, for the Renaissance. I could have lived without the Gulf War scenarios, but that's a minor quibble. If you don't like all of the historical restrictions, just refer back to Loyd Case's Civ II strategy piece in the last issue of *CGW* and hack your way to dominance of new Civ worlds. MicroProse, PC-CD, $29.95, (510) 522-1164, **www.microprose.com**

logical improvements were roughly even on both sides as the war progressed—a bit of a stretch, even as an abstraction. Land combat comes in two flavors: typical hex-based, compare odds and roll dice, and attrition, where you compare combat strengths and roll one die to resolve an entire front. If you think this sounds simple, think again. There are armor breakthroughs, naval interceptions, air interceptions and counter-interceptions, strategic movement, strategic warfare, round after round of counterattacks, and those sneaky paratroops. The sequence of play alone would make a good intro for *War and Peace*.

Although the game had its initial detractors (including yours truly), there were few indeed who didn't at least respect the depth of the design. As newer editions came out, some of the sillier aspects of gameplay (such as the game always coming down to a 2-1 odds attack at either London or Berlin) were modified, so that Prados' *magnum opus* was elevated to all-time classic status.

RISE AND DECLINE

Given what usually passes for depth in computer strategy games, *Third Reich* obviously had the potential to fill a niche. However, the first attempt to corral this runaway car on the computer—the Atari ST/Amiga version of *Third Reich* (1990)—was a train wreck. The abysmal AI was bad enough, but the design couldn't begin to handle even the simplest concepts of the storied boardgame, even when you played via e-mail against another human opponent. Disappointed gamers turned to other complex fare such as PACIFIC WAR, but to this day, there has been no strategic game that captured the feel of WWII in Europe quite the same as *Third Reich*.

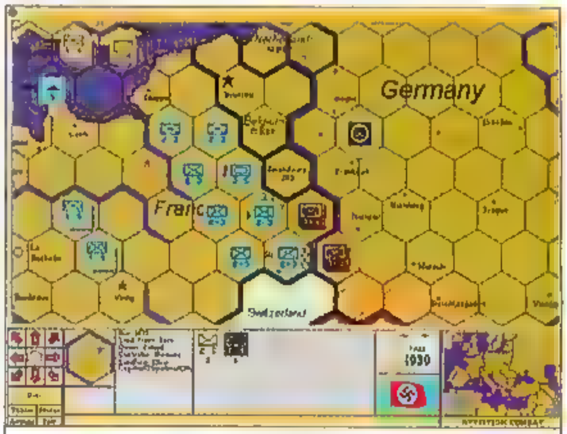
So, once again, Avalon Hill has tried to bring this storied game to the computer, reasonably thinking that the new technology available on the PC could handle the complexities of the game system. For better than three years, more than 50 people worked on taming this beast. At times, you feel as though it was worth it, but you can't help feeling this game would have been much better received two years ago.

You see, playing THIRD REICH involves stepping into a time warp. The interface would have looked dated next to CLASH OF STEEL, much less PANZER GENERAL or BATTLEGROUND: ARDENNES. After moving the cardboard counter–like units, you must *deselect* them before you can move on to the next unit, much less begin combat. In a game that requires as much strategic thinking as THIRD REICH, you don't need this kind of tedium. The graphics, quite frankly, are a big step backward for AH, after the blue velvet seas of WOODEN SHIPS AND IRON MEN; even when they are compared to the 20-year-old *Third Reich* boardgame, it's hard to see much improvement.

ORGANIZATIONAL HELL

An old wargame joke says that in Hell, lawyers get what they deserve, because they have to interpret *Third Reich* rules at the point of a pitchfork—which means that they invariably get stuck in more ways than one. The main problem with the boardgame is that it's the perfect example of Prados' kitchen sink design style: since nearly every idea the designer had made it into the game, there are exceptions to every rule. One nice thing about having THIRD REICH on the computer is that your opponent can't tell you, after 20 hours of play, "Well, you played a nice game, but I win because you violated rule 21.47C back on turn 3—sorry."

But even with the computer prohibiting any rules violations, learning the game is pure hell. In AH's heyday, they used to publish games with "basic" rules and an "advanced battle manual" so that you could ease yourself into the game. With THIRD REICH, the two-rulebook approach gives you one lengthy tome that describes



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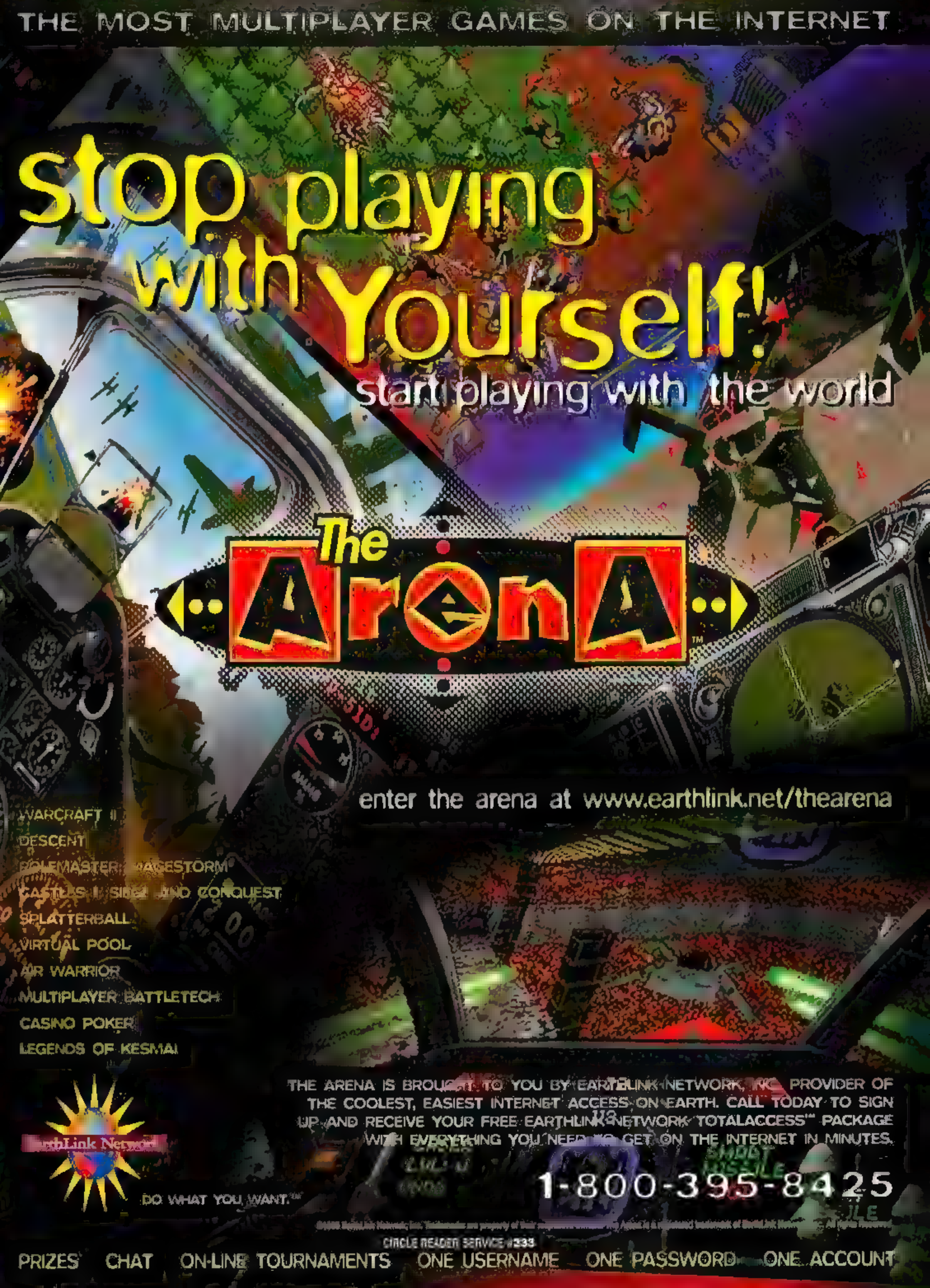
# of Players: 1-2 (hot-seat & e-mail)
Designers: Jamie Nash and David Hiller
Original Boardgame Design: John Prados
Publisher: The Avalon Hill Game Company Baltimore, MD (800) 999-3222
Reader Service #: 340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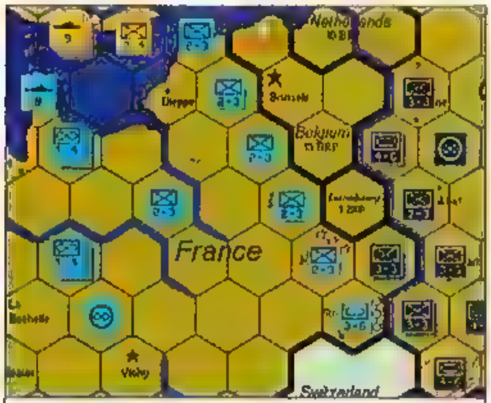
CG TIPS!

- Unlike the boardgame version, there are no partisans, which makes it easier to win as the Axis player. Unless the Russians are building paratroops (which they really can't afford), this means you have less need to garrison areas in the rear.
- If the British player is being really aggressive in the Mediterranean, it might leave a chink in England's armor. All British units are eliminated immediately when Vichy France is created (after Paris falls), so there's no Dunkirk. And naval units that intercept from different ports are treated as separate battles. So if the English are counting on the Gibraltar fleet to save them from invasion, it might not work, because you can handle them piecemeal. If you have even a 1-1 shot at London—take it!
- If you can't seem to get anywhere in Third Reich, one of the best ways to start is the *Gamer's Guide to Third Reich*. Although written for the boardgame version, this has several excellent articles, including how best to conduct a "southern strategy" through the Mediterranean and North Africa, that are still applicable to strategic play in computer THIRD REICH. Unlike today's often overpriced strategy guides, the *Gamer's Guide to Third Reich* is a steal at $8, available directly from Avalon Hill.

the complex game rules, and another lengthy tome that describes the complex computer game rules.

If by some miracle you masticate this incredible amount of pulp and distill it into something remotely fathomable, there is no tutorial built into the game to help you along. There is, to be fair, a nice introduction to the game's concepts by Marcus Watney (a longtime gaming author). There are also some suggested setups for units provided by AH. But anyone who has played the game before will recognize how mediocre these setups are, and they won't help newcomers to THIRD REICH understand why you might want to spend 15 Basic Resource Points to make a Declaration of War on Turkey, as opposed to Spain. The design team could have helped you through the process of deciding when to declare an Offensive option, and when to declare Attrition, with specific examples; there's certainly plenty of room on the CD to include screen shots with text explanations, if nothing else.



PASSIVITY IS PASSÉ The AI too often chooses Attrition, meaning an earlier Fall of France—and maybe an early Invasion of Britain

UNCOMFORTABLY NUMB

After figuring out the bizarre bridgehead rules—it's often better to retreat through a bridgehead—you tackle strategic warfare, only to find more abstractions. Everyone but the Poles seems to have paratroops; the Germans have no strategic bombers; the Allies have no submarines; there are no Luftwaffe jets at the end of the war. And even the cool chrome, such as Lend-Lease and trans-theater strategic movement, is more relevant to some erudite Pradosian model of WWII than to the real thing. But there are lessons to learn here. The rush of the *blitzkrieg* comes from only armor units having a Zone of Control into adjacent hexes. After an initial string of Axis victories, the economic might of the United States comes in on the Allied side, giving them the initiative with the infamous "flip-flop" of two Allied turns in a row (tends to help your D-Day preparations). Despite the near-total lack of tactical flavor, this *is* recognizable as WWII, even to players who've cut their gaming teeth on PANZER GENERAL.

But the AI, while not the embarrassment of the Atari/Amiga version, will still offer little challenge to any but the most novice THIRD REICH player. The game is just too complex for the AI to cover half the threats posed by a human general. And while die-hard THIRD REICH fans may be able to play the game via e-mail, they won't like struggling with the interface. And no one familiar with the game will be happy with the compromises made to the original design. Where are the partisans, or the wonderful what-if variants? In the end, THIRD REICH is another unhappy clone that can't match up to the original. If you want to see how a classic boardgame should be converted to the computer, look no farther than AH's WOODEN SHIPS AND IRON MEN, and pass this unhappy conflict by.

APPEAL: For those desiring hard-core wargaming with some of the depth, and none of the amenities.

PROS: Depth of strategy, some insights into the grand strategies of WWII in Europe. You can finally finish a campaign scenario of Third Reich in a single lifetime.

CONS: Design compromises, a poor interface, and weak graphics combine with the over-matched AI to produce a computer game much less than the sum of its boardgame parts.

CG RATED

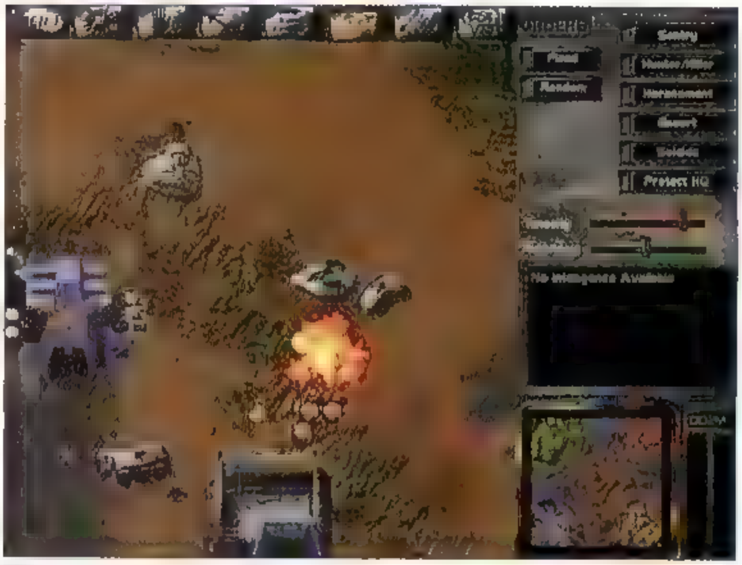
DEATH'S GREATEST HITS!
HERETIC
DESCENT
TERMINAL VELOCITY
NECRO DOME
THE ULTIMATE DOOM
WOLFENSTEIN 3D
WAR WIND
DUKE NUKEM 3D
MEGA RACE 2
QUAKE

The Future Of Warfare

Activision's DARK REIGN Takes You Beyond Today's Real-Time Wargame

by Patrick C. Miller

CG SNEAK PREVIEW
GAME STILL IN DEVELOPMENT



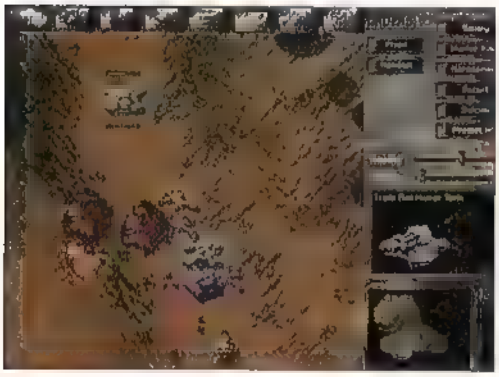
MORE THAN A CLONE Activision's DARK REIGN has a look similar to COMMAND & CONQUER, but offers quite a few enhancements, including increased realism.

Now that Activision's DARK REIGN has provided me with a glimpse of war in the future, I'm starting to have second thoughts about that cryogenic capsule reserved under my name. Imagine fighting enemy troops who can morph into trees and pick off your soldiers one by one, or who can assume the appearance of friendlies to steal your technology and sabotage your war machine.

In the future, tunneling vehicles enable the opposition to pop up unexpectedly anywhere behind your lines. Matter transport devices can instantly endanger areas you thought were safe. Then there's the hideous "hostage taker" vehicle. It scoops up your soldiers, automatically lobotomizes them, straps on explosives, and hurls them back at your troops.

THE WAR BETWEEN THE PLANETS

A real-time action-strategy game, DARK REIGN has a premise revolving around an intragalactic civil war, centuries into the future, being waged between the Imperium, a dictatorial mega-government, and the Freedom Guard, a band of revolutionaries that wants to end the Imperium's tyrannical reign (see sidebar). The game is currently under development and scheduled for release later in the first quarter of 1997.



TEARING UP THE TERRAIN Among DARK REIGN's nice features are terrain effects; these vehicles will have a slow time trying to climb out of this gorge.

DARK REIGN clearly takes aim at the market dominated by COMMAND & CONQUER and WARCRAFT II. It's difficult not to compare DARK REIGN to C&C, but there are several significant differences, the most notable of which is the increased level of realism. This includes true line of sight, fog of war, elevated terrain, and terrain effects on both movement and combat.

Unlike C&C, DARK REIGN's missions are nonlinear, which offers the advantage of enabling gamers to play more than 30 missions from either side in any order they choose. The disadvantage is that although the game will feature high-quality cut-scenes similar to those in Activision's MECHWARRIOR 2 series, Borrud says there will be fewer in comparison to C&C because of the difficulty of incorporating them in a logical manner. Even so, he notes that gamers will have the option of playing in a linear fashion that progresses by levels of difficulty.

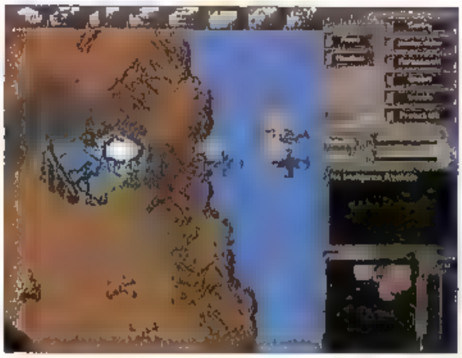
TERRA FIRMA AND FAUNA

Combat takes place on moons and planets scattered throughout the galaxy, on seven different map types, including desert, jungle, volcanic, and ice terrain. Terrain effects are realistically modeled. Some units, such as hover tanks, can cross terrain that's impassable for tracked or wheeled vehicles. Movement slows when vehicles pass over steep or rugged terrain

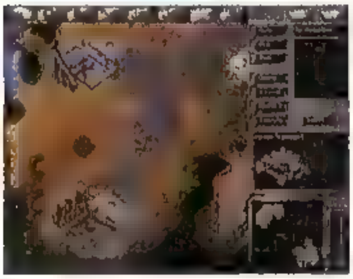
Units can also hide in forests, in valleys, or behind hills to conduct ambushes.

True line of sight and fog of war will be implemented in the game's final design, according to Activision. Each battle begins with an unexplored map. As units move around the map, their line of sight—shown as a highlighted circle around the unit—reveals terrain details, as well as sighted enemy units and structures. However, enemy dispositions disappear from the map unless they're in sight of a friendly unit. This system also allows for more realistic indirect fire from artillery units.

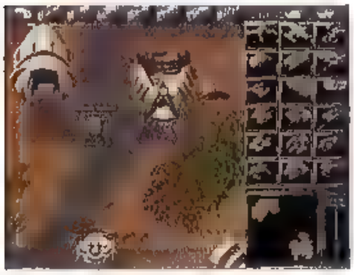
The game is being designed to run under DOS and Windows 95 using high-resolution 640x480 SVGA graphics. Multiplayer capabilities will include up to eight players by local area network (LAN) and head-to-head play by modem. LAN-to-LAN connections are also supported, and up to four players will be able to battle each other over the Internet. Activision plans to make new scenarios available through its Web site and allow players to upload their own scenarios created with the game's editor.



MULTIPLAY'S NEXT LEVEL Dark Reign will support eight-player LAN matches, head-to-head modem play, and four-player Internet matches.



GETTING THE POINT Dark Reign allows you to set up multiple way points for your units and move your units in formations.



MASS ATTACK As armies get larger, their reaction time slows, modeling the real-life difficulty of commanding large forces, and giving the little guys a chance.

MULTIPLAYER MAYHEM

"We know the real joy for people in strategy gaming is going out there and killing their friends, so we want to give them as much opportunity as possible to do that," Borrud laughs. "It's potentially the most important part of the game, not just LAN, but also Internet play. We want it to be a very exciting multiplayer experience. Diplomacy will be a huge element of the multiplayer game."

At the start of a multiplayer game, players can choose to be enemies, allies, or neutral. All ances are much more involved in Dark Reign, as allies can give each other units and transfer resources between one another.

One aspect of current multiplayer strategy gaming that Borrud hopes to avoid is a lack of variables that tends to lock players into doing the same thing every time once they've mastered the game. "We're trying to keep a lot of variables in the game that allow people to change their strategies and try different tactics," he says. "We also want to build up the computer AI to participate in multiplayer games to the point where you don't realize a computer is controlling the enemy."

MANAGED WARFARE

Scenario types range from battles of attrition to ambushes to spy missions behind enemy lines. As with other games in this genre, resource management plays a crucial role. Players not only manage personnel and coordinate campaigns but also must maintain a water supply and stockpile Element 115, the galaxy's currency and primary energy source.

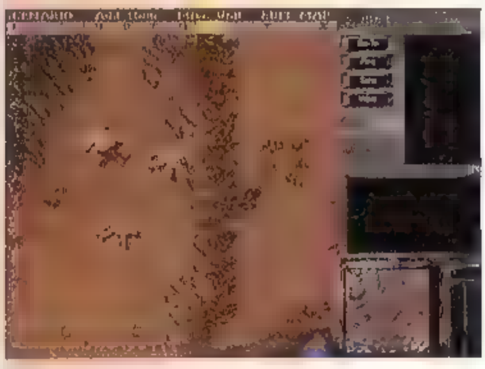
Command and control is also modeled by simulating the difficulty associated with coordinating a large force. As players acquire buildings and expand their forces, production slows and units take more time to respond to orders.

"This helps balance a huge army against a small, tight force," Borrud explains. "A larger army will usually overwhelm a smaller one, but it won't necessarily be easy."

There are 34 combat units, each with differing capabilities. Scout units can see further than others and morph into inanimate scenery. Body snatch-

Dark Reign Construction Kit

The mission construction kit to be included is one of the most powerful parts of the game, Borrud says. "It basically allows you to draw maps any way you can imagine. It will be much easier than current map editors because there will be a lot more control. You can create your own missions, vary the computer AI, and set victory conditions to determine how a game is won or lost. We're giving people the tools to do whatever we did to create the game so that they can design their own single-player or multiplayer missions."



TOOLS OF THE TRADE Dark Reign will include an incredibly powerful scenario editor that gives you nearly as many options for map design as the designers have.

COMPUTER GAMES

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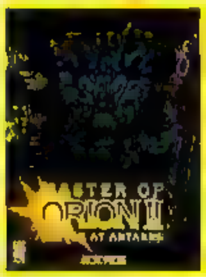

MASTER OF ORION II' In the deepest reaches of outer space, a xenophobic race lurks in the darkness, planning their revenge. Use multi-player feature by challenging friends over modem, network or compete in the hot seat. **CD $46**

'THRUSTMASTER GRAND PRIX 1' Gives you the competitive edge with variable throttle and braking at your fingertips and lightning fast thumb activated shifting. Securely clamps to your desk top. Total steering range is 180 degrees of travel. **$74**

'HIND' The Hind will contain a free for all arcade mode so new simulation enthusiasts can jump into the cockpit & quickly enter combat action. For veteran players, Hind contains a detailed mission planner. **CD $44**

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AND AGAIN.
AND AGAIN.

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Dark Reign History 101

The story line for Dark Reign begins in the year 2250, when Earth's population has swelled to 30 billion. Despite advanced technology and scientists' best efforts, the planet's resources and environment are stretched to the breaking point. As the gap between the "haves and have-nots" widens, criminal elements seize control of large portions of many cities. An alliance of major nations is formed in 2314 to bring crime under control. The solution to send the worst criminals to a penal colony on Io, Jupiter's moon, is so successful that by 2400, one million criminals a year are banished to moon-based space colonies.

The agency running this operation, the Jovian Detention Administration, amasses the world's largest army, giving it enough political clout to eventually absorb the government from which it had been created.

Years later, after the JDA becomes the Imperium and colonizes the galaxy, it maintains tight control over its galactic domain by imposing strict water rationing. Resentment over the Imperium's policies and ruthless tactics leads to widespread civil war. A revolutionary force known as the Freedom Guard emerges to challenge the Imperium, and a vicious war erupts.

Thrust into the middle of this war is a breakaway faction known as the Boleans, a highly advanced civilization based on the teachings of Alpheus Bole that fled Earth centuries before. Bole was a brilliant, charismatic scientist who discovered a method to convert matter using Element 115. When Bole's ship was damaged by JDA forces centuries earlier, it was thought that he and his knowledge were lost forever. However, during the Imperium–Freedom Guard civil war, a probe returns from that region of space and reveals that Bole could still be alive. As DARK REIGN begins, you assume command of a Bolean expedition to return to Earth space and find Bole and his lost technology, even if you have to battle through both the Imperium and the Freedom Guard to get them.

ers sneak into enemy territory and take on the enemy's appearance to serve as silent assassins. Units can be assigned movement way points and be ordered to perform certain functions at different points along their route. Formation moves will also be possible. Players can adjust the amount of autonomy and tenacity that their units display. For example, vehicles and infantry units can be set to suffer a certain amount of damage before they automatically retreat to hospitals and repair shops.

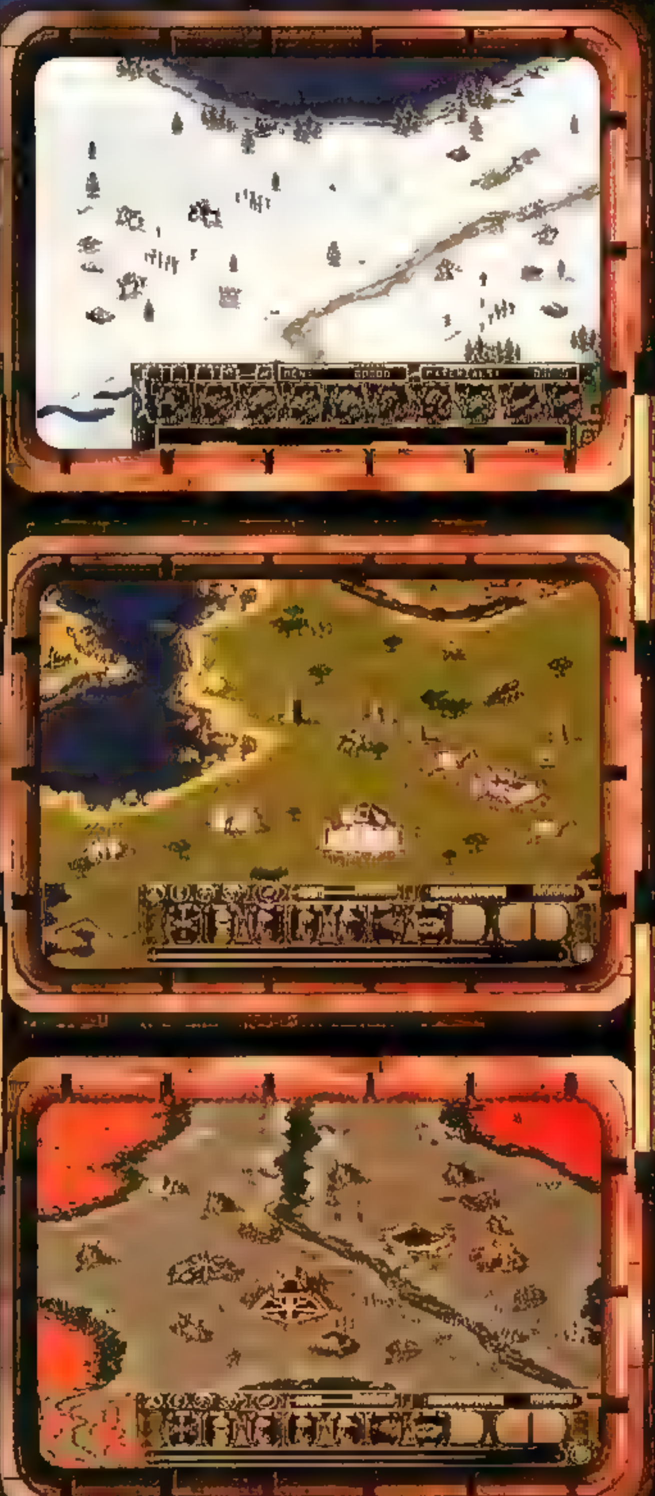
BUILD 'EM AND BOMB 'EM

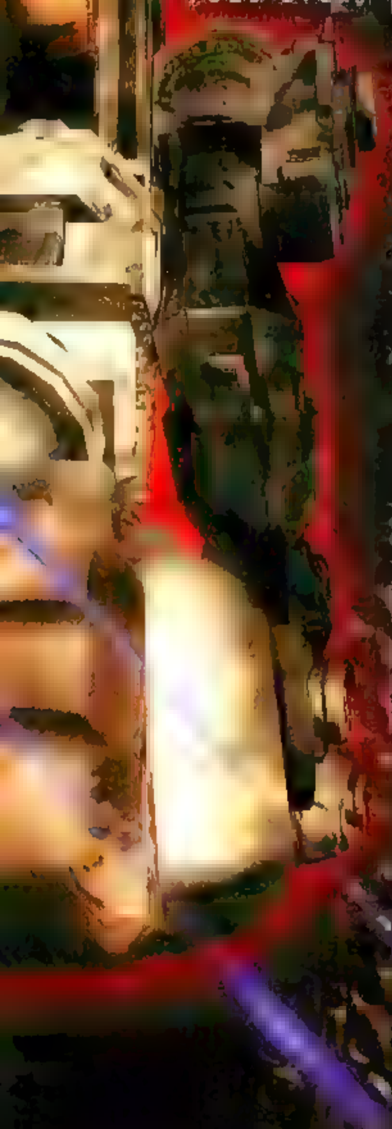
As in C&C, each side has distinct strengths and weaknesses. "One side has a more superior air power and the other has a more superior ground force," Borrud explains. Both sides will have common building types for utilities and resource gathering. However, there will also be specialty buildings that are unique to the Freedom Guard and the Imperium. These include tunneler and matter transport facilities and the "black ops" center that can create spies and saboteurs. Each side will have unique defensive systems to deal with air power and land attacks. Hospitals will be available to heal infantry, and repair bays have the ability to fix damaged vehicles. In addition, field medics and mechanics will be present on the battlefield.

Borrud says that each of the 32 building types will be highly detailed and animated. As in C&C, buildings can be repaired and sold, but selling a building will be a much slower process. "You're not going to be able to wait until the last second to decide," he notes.

After playing with an early version of DARK REIGN, I was impressed. The list of features planned for DARK REIGN, the number of variables, the level of control, and the improved realism give strategy gamers hope for the near future. If Activision can successfully pull all these pieces together, the company's first foray into real-time action-strategy gaming could very well set a new standard in the genre.

THE FUTURE OF
ACTUAL SCREEN SHOTS
7th LEVEL





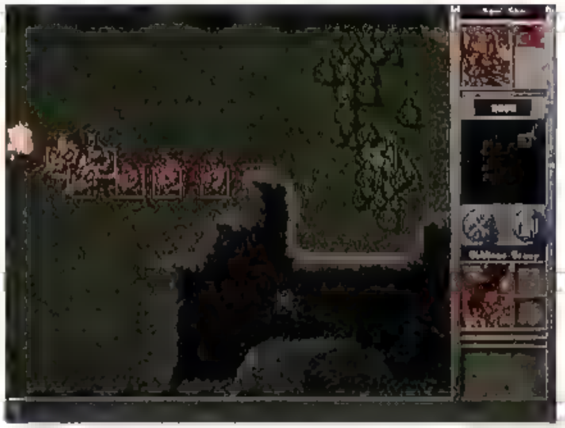
DIFFICULTY LEVEL
INTERMEDIATE

The Winds Of Change

New Real-Time Battlefields Await In War Wind

by Martin E. Cirulis

In this industry, it's inevitable: whenever there's a hit game, a spate of imitators is sure to follow. While most of these are going to be soulless clones, designed only to cash in on a gamer's desire to get more of what they like, some will be valid attempts to reinterpret the form and come up with something fresher and more interesting than the "same game, different graphics." Luckily, the latter is what we find in the latest offering from SSI, War Wind (WW). There's no denying this real-time wargame owes much of its basic design to the success of WarCraft II, but the designers have gone that extra step to make WW a game worth playing in its own right. Though the game suffers from a little "different for different's sake" syndrome, there is a rich sci-fi texture and enough depth in gameplay that most comparisons to its famous forebear will be favorable.



WAR WHAT? Any similarity to WarCraft helps, of course, but War Wind has enough strengths to stand on its own merit.

Price: $54 99
System Requirements: IBM-compatible Pentium 60, Windows 95, 16 MB RAM, 5 MB hard drive space, SVGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM drive, supports Windows 95 sound cards.
# of Players: 1-8
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
Designers: DreamForge
Publisher: SSI
Sunnyvale, CA
(800) 245-4525
Reader Service #: 337

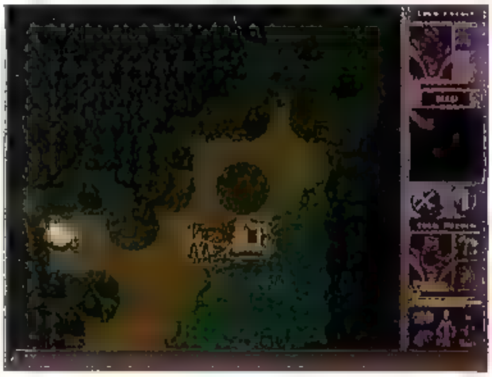
WEIRD WAR III

WW takes place on the troubled world of Yavaun, where four sentient, non-human races are striving for dominance. Now, your average clone game would just throw four races onto the planet and maybe give them some clichéd advantages and disadvantages just to be fancy. In WW, though, the four races have an intricate relationship to each other and the gameworld itself. There is enough detail here for an RPG, and the background provides enough material for four campaigns, one for each race. This is one of the rare cases where the plot for a sci-fi game hasn't made me wince.

Briefly, the situation on Yavaun is one of open rebellion. The planet's dark overlords, the Tha'roon, are losing control of things after thousands of years of dominance. These amoral tech-masters first suffer the open revolt of their worker class, the species of sentient plants known as the Eaggra. Then, as they use their warrior class, the hulking Obblinox, more and more brutally to suppress the rebellion, these indentured soldiers finally revolt themselves. The fourth power on Yavaun, the mysterious and very transcendental Shama'li, are initially distant from the conflict, but Tha'roon paranoia (as well as their own agenda to unify the races) draws them in. Each of the four campaigns reflects the concerns of the respective races: Tha'roon battle to regain their empire, the Eaggra for freedom, the Obblinox for an empire of their own, and the Shama'li to see that precious knowledge is not consumed by the war.

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

At the most basic level, WW can be looked at as WarCraft 2.5. The designers took most people's comments on the award-winning Orc-Human brawl fest and implemented the better ones in War Wind. The playing fields are larger, there are more races to play, the large variety of units are very distinct in both look and combat values for each race, magic spells are more interesting, and there are even high-tech cybernetic improvements to keep in mind. Aside from this, it is still about building towns and fighting with lit

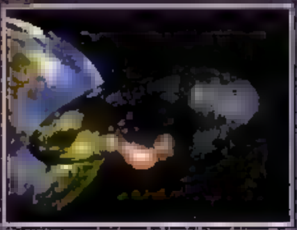


THAT'S IT? Though the combat model has stealth units and scouts, War Wind is limited in its vehicles and non-ground combat, with only a few sea transports.

LAUGH IN THE FACE OF DANGER...

ALIEN INCIDENT

PC-CD ROM



...OR CHUCKLE, chortle or even guffaw as you embark on your quest to solve the "Alien Incident". If you enjoy "classic" graphic adventure games where an intuitive interface and a sense of humor are the key ingredients to fun, then this is your kind of game.

It's Halloween night and you've just witnessed your uncle being abducted by aliens after his wormhole spawner invention sprung a leak. It's up to you, Benjamin Richards, to unravel the mystery of where they've taken your uncle. With simple mouse clicks explore spooky mansions, dark and mysterious forests, underwater caverns, creepy cemeteries, a challenging maze and the aliens' mothership itself. Hundreds of puzzles and clues provide you with hours of immersive gameplay. Meet interesting people such as Yodel the tree dweller, plus dozens of other strange and bizarre characters in a humorous game that's easy enough even for adults to play!

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PHILIPS

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ANDERSON,

I NEED A VOLUNTEER.

THAT TANK UP THE ROAD? SOMEONE'S GOTTA TAKE IT OUT.

I NEED SOMEONE I CAN COUNT ON. SOMEONE WHO'S MAN ENOUGH TO RUN THROUGH MACHINE GUN FIRE TO GET THE JOB DONE.

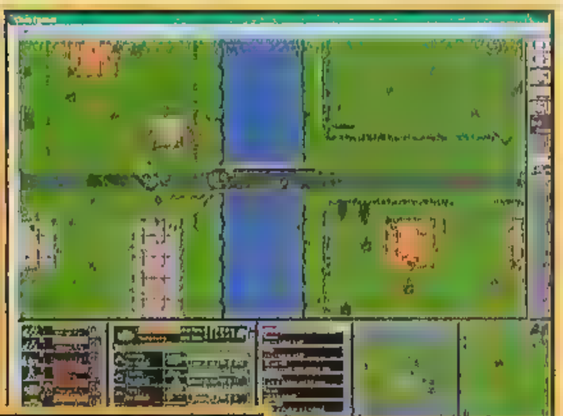
AND ANDERSON, THERE COULD BE A MEDAL IN IT FOR YA.

Anderson, Chuck. Sergeant. Leads 2nd Platoon's Recon team. Probably gotta wife back home. Damn good soldier. You give him an order and he figures out the best way to get the job done. So what's he doing cowering behind that bombed-out farmhouse?

Saving his own butt.

That's what you should expect if you order him to do something crazy. In Close Combat everything reacts like it does on the battlefield, from the ripping canvas hiss of the German MG42 machine gun to the screams of the men it hits. It all goes down right in front of you. In real time.

So there's no time to thumb through the manual. You work your mouse like a weapon. Point and click and *boom*, the shooting starts the second your men step off Omaha Beach and it don't let up 'til they've taken Saint-Lô. Troops, terrain, situations — if you want to get any more accurate, you'll have to shave your head.



Americans vs. Germans: which side you gonna take?

Mac vs. Windows 95: which side you gonna take?

Wanna go head to head with other military geniuses? All you need is a TCP/IP connection. And guts.

To experience Close Combat visit your nearest recruiter or head straight for the battlefield at **http://www.microsoft.com/games/kickbutt/**

Download the trial version and start your basic training today.

Microsoft

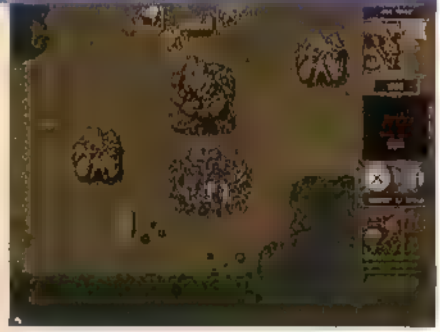
Where do you want to go today?™

COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS ★★★★★ RATED

Village Building ... Yavaun Style

While most of us are getting pretty skilled at building bases in real-time games these days, War Wind has some subtleties that are not readily apparent. Knowing about them can benefit the aware, especially when they find themselves playing real opponents with preconceptions from other games. The most important advantage in WW construction routines is that a building does not have to be complete in order to function. Labs only a quarter complete will still take in units and allow them to research. Other buildings, such as recruiting centers, will also begin to function while mostly incomplete, so be aware of this and use it to your benefit.

Also, while the offensive wall is a poor replacement for cannon towers, they can be used to funnel enemy units into killing zones for your defending units. Create a funnel of least resistance with these electric fences and place a vicious ranged fighting group at the bottom, and you can just watch the bodies pile up.



MEN AT WORK Unlike in WarCraft and C&C, buildings can function before they're finished. The paint might still be drying, but this Shama'li building is ready for visitors.

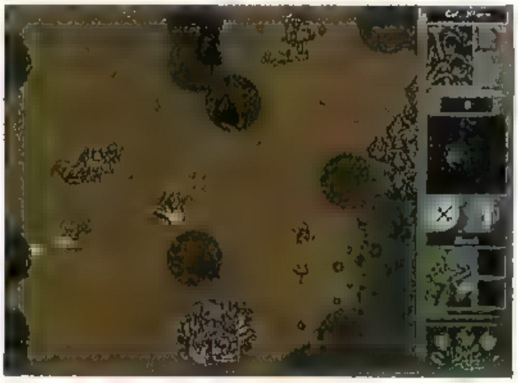
One final tip is that trucks make excellent escape vehicles in case all else fails. Should your base look like it is going to fall, load up some workers and your precious Leader into a couple of trucks and get the heck out of Dodge. Find a nice spot out in the boonies and try to get back on your feet before you are discovered again.

tle SVGA guys, so if that sort of thing doesn't interest you, you may as well walk on by.

Some things are simplified in this game. Resource gathering has been reduced to one generic "resource" that is collected from forests and crystals. Also absent is any kind of real naval game (just transports and armed transports) or air power. Also, fighting units and workers are recruited from the basic worker unit, as opposed to being "built," a step I find more realistic for a fantasy game and less predictable.

I am disappointed that the designers limited the game's air combat and vehicles. With the use of technology and magic in this game, there was a real opportunity to bridge the gap between WarCraft II and Command and Conquer with unwieldy but powerful machines fighting side by side with killer cyborgs and ninja wizards.

At least the simplified infrastructure allows for a more complex combat model. Instead of the simple division between melee and ranged units that we've seen previously, WW pieces are rated for types of combat, and players can develop and react to more realistic combined arms tactics. Camouflage and disguise capability for some units means sneak attacks are finally possible in a non-cloaking way. This actually makes a scout a relevant unit. Another excellent touch is the first realistic fog-of-war system. Finally somebody has realized that commanders usually have general maps of any given area before they go in. WW simulates this by "graying out" the unexplored regions, showing major terrain but little detail and no enemy units. As your units explore, the details are revealed per usual, but at least you have a relevant amount of information from the start instead of blundering around in the dark.



FREEDOM MARCH Happily, each race has its own unique campaign with a distinct story line and missions. Here, the Eaggra are fighting to free themselves from Tha'roon slavery.

ONE TO GROW ON

WW, while not truly original, still has what it takes to carve a niche for itself, especially if SSI supports it. It would be a shame to see the best sci-fi computer game mixed in years go into a one-shot game. With the multiple campaigns there is plenty of gameplay for the buck here, and while the "quest" missions are fairly uninspired, the sheer variety of opponents and modifiable units keeps things fresh for a long time. The multiplayer suite is for eight players, and very nice, once you get past the seemingly imposing multiplayer game wizard. At this time there are some serious hiccups in the modem routines, but the game is designed for use with Mplayer, and I suspect it will quickly gather fans from the old Orcs 'n' Humans lot once a technical patch is available.

War Wind may not be the freshest breath of air in the industry, but it does make a very good show for itself, and it is a storm that should be respected. If you are at all looking for some smart, real-time gaming, touch down on Yavaun and pick a side. They're waiting for you.

APPEAL: Fans of WarCraft II looking for some more real-time wargaming in a new setting.

PROS: A cleverly detailed world, with originality, a better-than-usual combat model, excellent fog-of-war implementation, great variety of units, and unique campaigns.

CONS: Game speed needs to be turned down to get the most out of combat options. Not very modem-friendly at the moment. Cyborgs should be able to build planes.

CG RATED ★★★★

DIFFICULTY LEVEL INTERMEDIATE

CG CHOICE

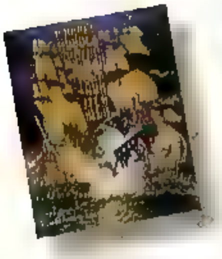
Battle Stations!

Take The Helm In The Best Age Of Sail Wargame Yet

by Bob Proctor

Avalon Hill has numerous classic board games to its credit, several of which have been converted to the computer. Some of these conversions have been mediocre (ADVANCED CIVILIZATION), while others (1830) have been outstanding. WOODEN SHIPS AND IRON MEN (WSIM), the latest classic conversion, definitely falls into the latter category. In this case, Avalon Hill has taken a proven game system, increased the realism, and given it a point-and-click interface that makes it very easy to play.

WSIM provides a rare experience in gaming. You command only a single vessel, but it is one that has many complex strengths and weaknesses, giving you a game that is indeed as intricate as chess, where maneuvers and tactics ensue. The computer version preserves this gaming philosophy, focusing on single-ship actions in two-thirds of the scenarios. With one exception, all of the scenarios are taken from the boardgame. Missing are the larger battles: *Ushant* (63 ships), *The Saints* (67 ships), and *Chesapeake Bay* (43 ships). *Trafalgar* is the largest scenario present but has been cut down from 60 ships to 23 and represents only half the action—Nelson's column against about a third of the French-Spanish fleet. Though commanding 30+ ships could be unwieldy (especially when the AI doesn't keep the ships in line), WSIM doesn't even give you the option to command more if you are up to the task, since it can only support up to 25 ships per side per scenario.



Price: $59.95
System Requirements: IBM-compatible 486-33, 8 MB RAM, 11 MB hard drive space, SVGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM drive, Microsoft-compatible mouse; supports Sound Blaster-compatible sound cards.
# of Players: 1-2 (e-mail, hotseat)
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
Designer: Stanley Associates, Joe Balkoski
Original Boardgame Design: S. Craig Taylor
Publisher: Avalon Hill
Baltimore, MD
(800) 999-3222
Reader Service #: 338

ALL HANDS ON DECK From WOODEN SHIPS' main menu, you can play one of the 18 scenarios, try the 1813 American campaign, or engage in multiplayer battles by hotseat or e-mail

ALL I ASK IS A TALL SHIP AND A STAR TO STEER HER BY

The increase in realism comes from improving the sailing model. The boardgame uses hexagon-based movement, so that there are six directions, with a ship being able to move into any five (you can't sail directly into the wind). This has been increased to eight directions and seven possible courses in the computer version. Speed is controlled by the amount of sail you set: either Full, Plain, or Battle. When you combine seven possible courses with three speeds, you get more than double the number of movement choices available in the boardgame, making maneuvering much more interesting.

While this is a big improvement, it is too bad that WSIM didn't add even more realism by increasing the directions to 16, or even trying to offer full 360-degree movement and a model that calculated speed through water based on a rating for the ship and the amount of sail set. Then you would have the ability to distinguish between ships that could "point" well (truly sail within 45 degrees of the wind) and more awkward vessels that would be limited to sailing close-hauled at 67 degrees of the wind. Maybe we can hope for such improvements in a sequel.

THE WHEEL'S KICK, THE WIND'S SONG, AND THE WHITE SAILS SHAKING

Playing WSIM is a delight. The 3D perspective and a well-designed interface make you feel like you really are commanding these miniature ships. The key to everything is the command sidebar, which reappears over the battle map when each turn ends. It displays an incredible wealth of information, including your current ship, her state of damage, wind strength, and, to the right, the sail she's carrying. You can change sail by clicking on the sails on the command bar, provided you have crew assigned there.

Using the steering wheel in the center of the command sidebar to steer is fairly intuitive; you move forward by default, so you only need to handle the wheel when you want to turn. Each spoke of the wheel represents a different maneuver. When

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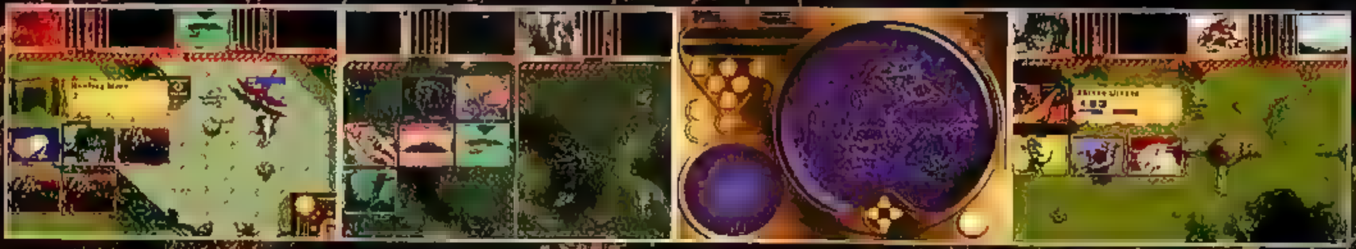

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #162

Hints From The Tactical Officer

Raking fire—shooting at the end of a ship—does more damage, and it may prevent the enemy from returning fire, since the cannon all point to the side.

When you have more than one ship, try to keep them in a line. This gives every ship an unobstructed field of fire on both sides and helps to block fire at the vulnerable ends of the ship. This is called the "line of battle" and is why major warships of this period were called "ships of the line."

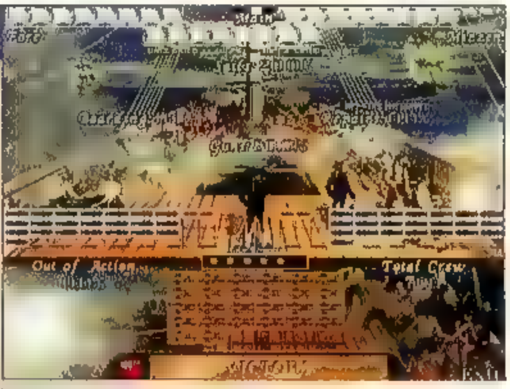
Another important tactic from the Age of Sail—once again aptly demonstrated in the game—is "weather gauge." This means being upwind of your opponent, preventing your foe from sailing directly toward you. You can sail right at him and with good speed. This allows you to control the range at which the action takes place.

The main value of boat speed is that it lets you take the weather gauge away from your opponent.

Smaller ships can be dismasted if they try to carry Full Sail in a heavy breeze; larger ships can suffer the same fate in a gale. Check for an increase in wind strength every turn if you've got Full Sail set and reduce sail immediately—unless you're fleeing for your life or feeling very lucky!

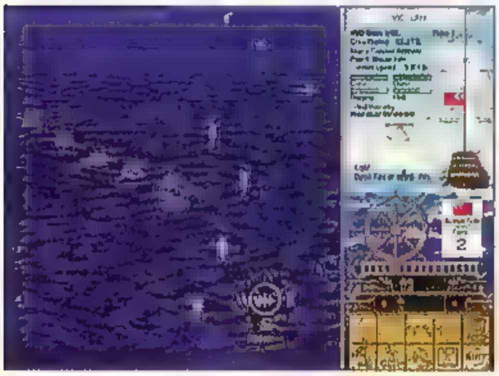
Battle Sail represents the smallest amount of sail area. It is preferred in battle because it minimizes the damage done to rigging and reduces the ship's rolling to produce a more stable gun platform. You'll never hit anything—much less do significant damage—firing from a ship with Full Sail set in a normal breeze.

Check your opponent's damage frequently; you can easily get a critical hit and not know it. For example, a hit on the steering gear may prevent his changing course for a turn or more, allowing you to get a decisive stern rake.



SHIP'S STATUS This status screen for HMS Victory shows no damage. Check the status of your opponents frequently; if you've created a weakness in the enemy ship, exploit it.

you order a move, each change to the ship's path is highlighted on the water. When things look good, just click to make the turn. After each turn, there is a short delay before you can turn again. If you have 10 percent or more of the crew assigned to sails, you can make successive 45-degree turns. To avoid collision with your own ships, you can see the projected paths of other ships that have already received orders.



READY CANNON Wooden Ships' combat is detailed, but also very easy to learn, thanks to the handy command sidebar. Here, a 130-gun Spanish ship is about to fire at HMS Victory, though the latter will return some raking fire.

WSIM offers 18 different scenarios in Revolutionary and Napoleonic battle, with ships from Britain, France, Spain, and the USA. There is also an interesting campaign that lets you captain an American warship on a cruise of several months during the summer of 1813. You make no decisions about navigation or logistics, just combat. Events are reported in a log book. When a sail is sighted, you choose whether to approach or avoid, and if you approach and identify the vessel, you must then decide to fight or escape. Most of your contacts will be small, lightly armed transports. Since the American cruisers are generally faster than any enemy ship their size or larger, this is pretty easy until accumulated damage begins to hamper ship's speed. A typical campaign is 10 to 20 battles, but most engagements will be very quick, and the entire campaign can be finished in one sitting of two to four hours. Once you've finished the scenarios and campaigns, you can create your own battles with the included scenario editor.

AND A QUIET SLEEP AND A SWEET DREAM WHEN THE LONG TRICK'S OVER

WSIM passes my tests for a great wargame. Unlike in some other wargames, the realism and complexity of combat make me want to return to each historical battle and play both sides to test different strategies and tactics. It's rare that you get a game this good that leaves you wanting more, but Wooden Ships and Iron Men is exactly that. It's an almost perfect conversion, capturing all the strengths of the boardgame while making it easier, accessible, and even more fun to play. ❧

APPEAL: For any fan of Age of Sail naval combat.

PROS: WSIM goes beyond even the classic boardgame in realism and depth of gameplay. Great interface and documentation, with an interesting campaign.

CONS: Could use some more scenarios; lacks network play, doesn't support really large engagements.

CG RATED ★★★★

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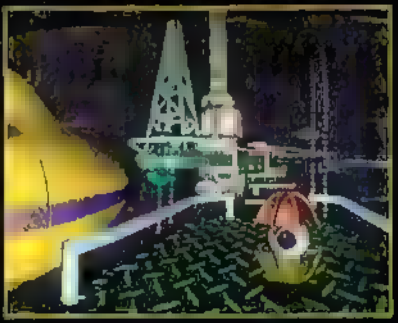

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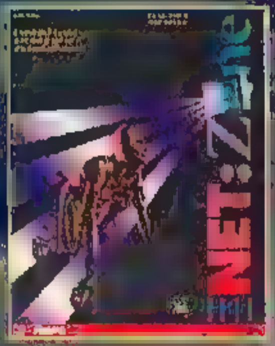

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PATIENT 4-O. Treated for severe lacerations received when he was knocked off his rocket by competitor's cable while "Rocket Racing." Rhinoplasty and ear reconstruction were also necessary, as patient's face was smashed repeatedly against the ground and walls while traveling in excess of 100 mph.

PATIENT 98-B: Treated for massive head trauma suffered after ramming his rocket into an exploding ball while playing "Rocket Ball." The accident completely welded his eye sockets shut and tore 90% of the skin off his face. Needless to say, this was no ordinary "lift and tuck."

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #351

DIFFICULTY LEVEL INTERMEDIATE

Lost In Space

Bullfrog's Real-Time '50s-Style Sci-Fi Wargame

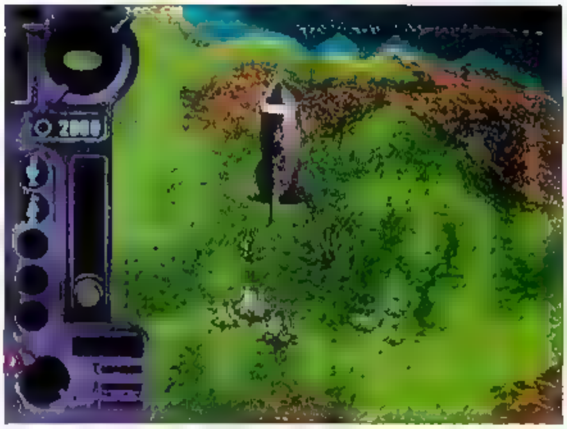
by Mark Clarkson

A long, long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away, four distinct alien races were engaged in a bloody grudge war of, ahem, stellar proportions: the totally laid-back and stoney Bohemians, the cold-fish Sammans, the sullen Schnozzoids, and an especially offensive race called the Earthlings. Before long, though, a mysterious and ridiculously powerful race called the Ethereals dropped in on the battling factions to put a stop to a war that was ravaging the cosmic ecosystem. These tree-hugging aliens decided to turn all members of the warring races into meek and happy vegetables via their patented Adam Process.

The former enemy races were then sentenced to work together to reforest, repopulate, and recolonize this sector's war-ravaged planets. For extra motivation, the Ethereals announced that the very best colonization team would be spared from the Adam Process. So each race's team is now damned determined to be the best environmentalist in the galaxy—even if that means trampling over every tree, bush, flower, and enemy camp that gets in the way.

Price: $39 95
System Requirements: IBM-compatible 486/66 8MB RAM, 42 MB hard drive space, SVGA graphics, 2x CD-ROM drive, MS DOS 5 0 or Windows 95, mouse, supports most major sound cards
# of Players: 1-4 (network)
Protection: None (CD must be in drive)
Designer: Bullfrog
Publisher: Electronic Arts
San Mateo, CA
(800) 245-4525
Reader Service #: 339

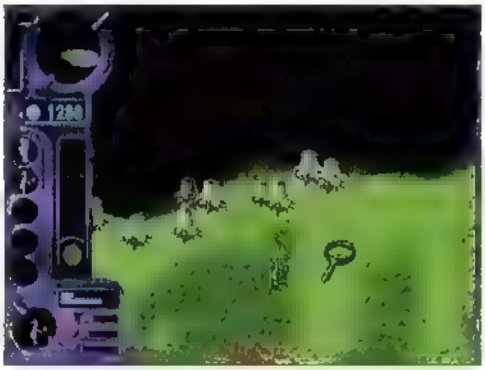
GENE WARS, Bullfrog's latest creation, is a real-time strategy game that plays like a hybrid which is one part COMMAND & CONQUER and another part from a Monty Python production of *Forbidden Planet*. The graphics, featuring cigar-shaped rocket ships and chrome-plated flying saucers, are straight out of '50s sci-fi movies, while the CD music is a wonderful knock-off of *Forbidden Planet*, with all the bings, boings, and warbling synthesizers. The voice characterizations are great, helping to give each different race a distinct personality. My favorite, the Bohemians, are so laid-back (and stoned) that I can hardly picture them getting off their couches, let alone taking part in a war.



THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE GENE WARS is a wacky real-time game with a '50s sci-fi feel, complete with great aliens with distinct personalities, classic flying saucers, and cigar-shaped rockets.

YOUR AWAY TEAM

You command teams of up to five specialists as you attempt to establish colonies, re-seed planets, and kick opposing alien butt...when the Ethereals aren't looking, of course. Engineers build, repair, and upgrade your planetary structures. Botanists gather seeds and plant new forests. Geneticists analyze the DNA of newly discovered creatures, which you can then synthesize, and can also heal other members of the team. Rangers exert influence over creatures, encouraging them to breed, eat, or attack. Rangers and geneticists carry stun guns for use against hostile animals.



GENETICS 101 A large part of GENE WARS' gameplay involves sending your botanist and rangers to survey the land, uncover the map's fog, and research the five animals so you can cross-breed a powerful mutant army.

No C&C clone would be complete without a resource to mine, and GENE WARS has COOP—a catch-all substance useful both as a building material and as stock for growing synthetic life-forms. Every new building, upgrade, and creature costs COOP, which you obtain by extracting minerals from the ground and by recycling plants and dead animals at Recycling Plants.

Bases consist of the usual melange of specialty structures. Pulpers process plant matter and produce moldings necessary for upgrading your structures. Landing pads let you acquire new team members or send current team members off the planet. Technology centers allow you to build other high-tech structures such as force fields, stun cannons, and Ethereal detectors.

The single most crucial structure to your eventual success is the Gene Pod

You've been waiting for this sequel.
He's been waiting for you.
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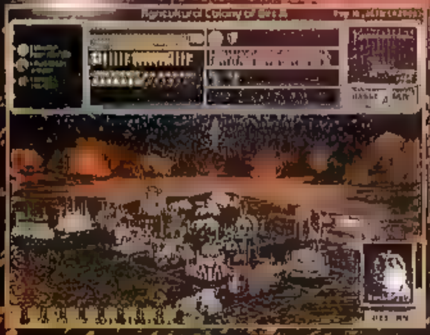
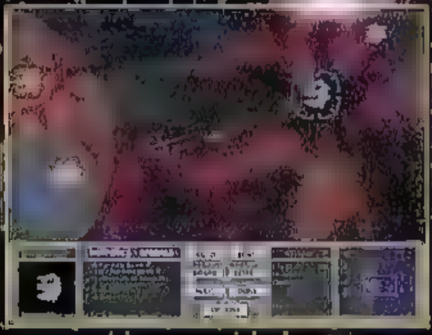
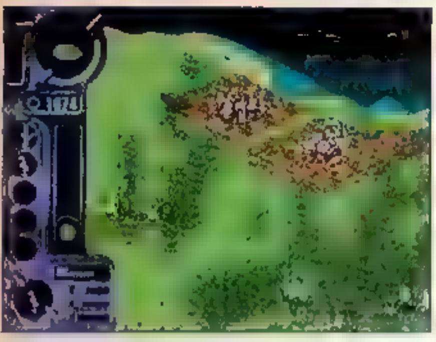




Tips For The Manual-less



I'M AN ENGINEER, NOT A DOCTOR The engineer, shown building a power plant, is your basic construction unit. Have him build enough Gene Pods for you so that you can simultaneously upgrade and produce mutant creatures.

Never begin an upgrade to your gene pod without first building a backup. Gene pod upgrades take forever, and you'll be unable to produce new creatures for base defense if attacked.

You begin the game with four of each specialist, of which up to five can be on the planet at a time. The more a specialist performs his given specialty, the better he gets at it. The idea is to rotate your specialists to build up all their experience levels. I prefer to concentrate on a few favorites, who consequently gain more experience more quickly. If you decide to go this route, save often in case you lose a precious specialist.

With enough experience, Schnozzoids become invisible. Invisible Schnozzoids are especially adept at sneaking past generally less-observant human opponents. Hide a Ranger near his base to intensify your creatures' attacks.

A botanist can grow any plant from any seed. Gather seeds from less desirable plants, or from your opponents' plants, then turn them into whatever crops you desire.

You don't have to choose a balanced team. You can drop four engineers to build a base really quickly, then use the landing pad to exchange them for other specialists. Remember that you can still win a level, even if the Ethereals are totally infuriated at you. For example, consider dropping in a team with three engineers and a couple of geneticists. Run the team to the enemy base and have your engineers destroy his structures, while the geneticists stun attacking animals and heal wounds.

There's no reforestation, but if the win is more important than the points and the approval, go for it.

If you do play dirty, make sure you do it while the Ethereals are away. If they catch your engineer blowing up enemy bases, or your botanist chain-sawing forests, they'll shoot or abduct your specialists.

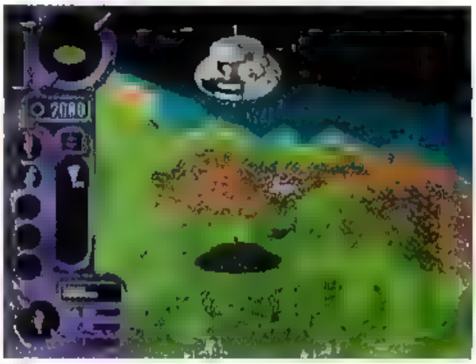
and its upgrades. It is here that mules, birds, frogs, and hideous cross-bred genetic mutants will pop out like so many slices of toast.

TRYING ON A NEW PAIR OF GENES

Bioengineered animals play a big part in your planetary rebeautification projects, providing labor and military protection in addition to planetary biomass. You begin with only the genetic recipe for the mule, a strong but recalcitrant animal that can be used to harvest plants and haul dead comrades to the recycler. With their strong kick, mules are also useful for colony defense and attack.

As you progress, your geneticist will track down and research other animals: crabs, frogs, birds, and fire-breathing dinos. Each species has its particular specialty, be it speed, carpentry skill, or pure botanist-eating, forest-burning power.

Given the right mood and a little coaxing from your ranger, creatures will mate outside of their own species, producing hybrids like Dinomules, Crabobirds, and Birdofrogs. Such hybrids have genuine value. For example, while a mule can harvest plants and a crab can help your engineer upgrade structures, a Crabomule can do both.



CASPER THE FRIENDLY ALIEN The tree-hugging Ethereals are powerful aliens who ensure that you don't do more damage to the galaxy's environment; luckily they only stop by periodically.

MISFIRES, GLITCHES, AND GAPING HOLES

While the GENE WARS interface is generally delightful, there are some major oversights, including a lack of adequate hot keys. You can't pop directly to selected areas of the map (as in WARCRAFT II or C&C) or assign a group of creatures to a key for easy selection (like in C&C).

Worse, there is no speed control. While GENE WARS bogs a little on my P-83 overdrive VLB system, on my P-133 machine, running as a DOS game in Windows 95, it screams. Specialists and animals both flit madly across the screen like gnats on a crystal meth tweak. That's a problem, especially since things move so fast you can hardly draw a bead on a moving target for selection purposes.

Despite the interface oversights, GENE WARS has a lot going for it and might be a subtle, enjoyable game were it not for one huge gaping flaw: a pathetic, skimpy, wholly inadequate manual. What is the difference between the Gene Pod and the Gene Lab? What are the special abilities of hybrid creatures? What structures are available and what is the upgrade path to get them? Exactly which shade of brown represents arid ground? Bullfrog isn't telling. It's too bad, really, because if it weren't for the lack of a manual, gamers might have had a fighting chance to savor the humor and originality of Bullfrog's wacky '50s-style space romp.

APPEAL: Real-time war fans looking for a break from WARCRAFT and C&C; those who appreciate humor and a different style of real-time gaming.

PROS: Beautiful graphics, great sound, and a sense of humor.

CONS: Without a useful manual, you're reduced to fumbling around, hoping to stumble onto the right way to play. Interface oversights add to the frustration.

RATED ★★★

And they wanted it all. So we created GameSpot. The one place online with everything a gamer could want. Interactive reviews. Downloadable demos. Game secrets. For more PC games than they could ever hope to play. All in one place, updated daily. We gave them what they wanted. Now we can't get rid of them.

CIRCLE READER SERVICE #250

DIFFICULTY LEVEL
ADVANCED

This Isn't Your Uncle Vanya's T-34/76

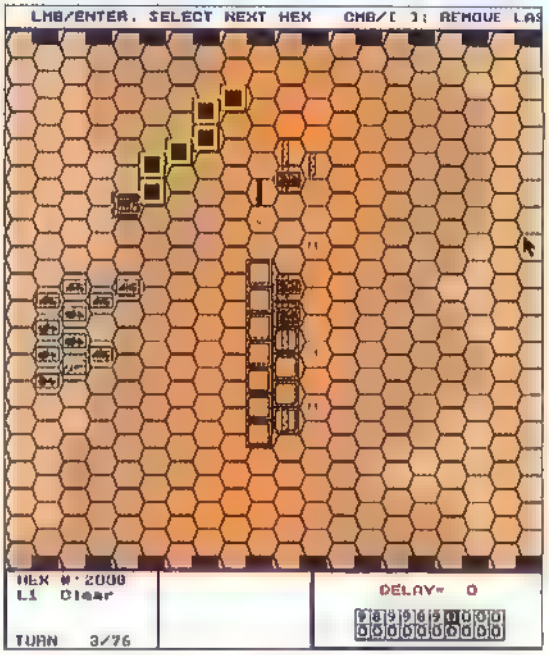
If You Felt STEEL PANTHERS Was Too Light, Then TIGERS 2.0 Is Your Game

by James Cobb

You say that STEEL PANTHERS whetted your appetite for WWII tactical games, but you want more depth in understanding how things really were on the Steppes in 1941-1945? Well, you're in luck. The second version of HPS' TIGERS ON THE PROWL will give you all the detail you can handle, as well as a playable nail-biter of a game. So open up that hatch and find out what a detailed war simulation is.

Like its predecessor, TIGERS 2.0 is a squad/platoon simulation of 1939-1945 Eastern Front action at a one minute/turn, 100 meters/hex scale. It handles all possible combat factors in minute detail: vehicle size, weapons, armor, and capabilities; supply; morale; communications; and training. Play consists of issuing combat and movement orders through a series of drop-and-drag menus followed by simultaneous resolution.

The major improvement of TIGERS 2.0 over its predecessor is its improved interface. Instead of clicking all over the map to check unit status and give orders, there is a staff menu of eight items: personnel, intelligence, ops/movement, supply targeting, comm/delay, fire support, air liaison, and engineering. These menus are grids where you can instantly see, for example, the status of an infantry platoon. Then you can immediately go to it on the map by clicking on its menu box, and issue orders for said unit or its entire company. This instant access to data does away with wrestling with the game mechanics and allows you to actually play the game



NEW CLAWS, SAME FUR TIGERS has been upgraded to PANTHERS IN THE SHADOWS standards, including graphics. But let's be honest, folks: no one plays HPS games for the way they look.

Price: $59.95 + $4 S&H
System Requirements: 486 or better, 4 MB RAM, 10 MB hard drive space, VGA graphics
# of Players: 1-2 (e-mail)
Protection: Document look-up
Designer: Scott Hamilton
Publisher: HPS Simulations
P.O. Box 3245
Santa Clara, CA 95055
(408) 554-8381
Reader Service #: 341

MORE THAN A RETREAD

And the game isn't just a dry, realistic exercise—it's a joy to play once you've circumvented the steep learning curve. To win, you must master actual tactics such as overwatch fire, use of defilades, proper recon tactics, and correct artillery deployment. The AI knows its stuff and will punish players who just shove units around. Although STEEL PANTHERS rewards combined arms tactics to a degree, the number of variables in TIGERS 2.0 adds more possibilities for deviations from intelligent play to backfire

For instance, sending a tank company dashing forward will not only put it in a trap, but the ensuing communication and morale difficulties as it moves farther from its headquarters will make extraction difficult, precious minutes will pass before orders are received, and the troops' morale may not be such that they will follow their leaders when the word to move out is received. As a result, you must formulate a sound tactical plan and carry it through to the end. TIGERS 2.0 is an invigorating challenge

The enjoyment is only enhanced by the myriad of new play features in TIGERS 2.0. "Shoot and Scoot" allows units to fire and then move before they can be acquired by the enemy, assuming they are trained in the technique. The chances of ill-trained troops going to ground is shown as "Stop Under Fire." Morale now includes "Wavering," a state of functioning between degraded performance and outright routing. If a unit is under fire and

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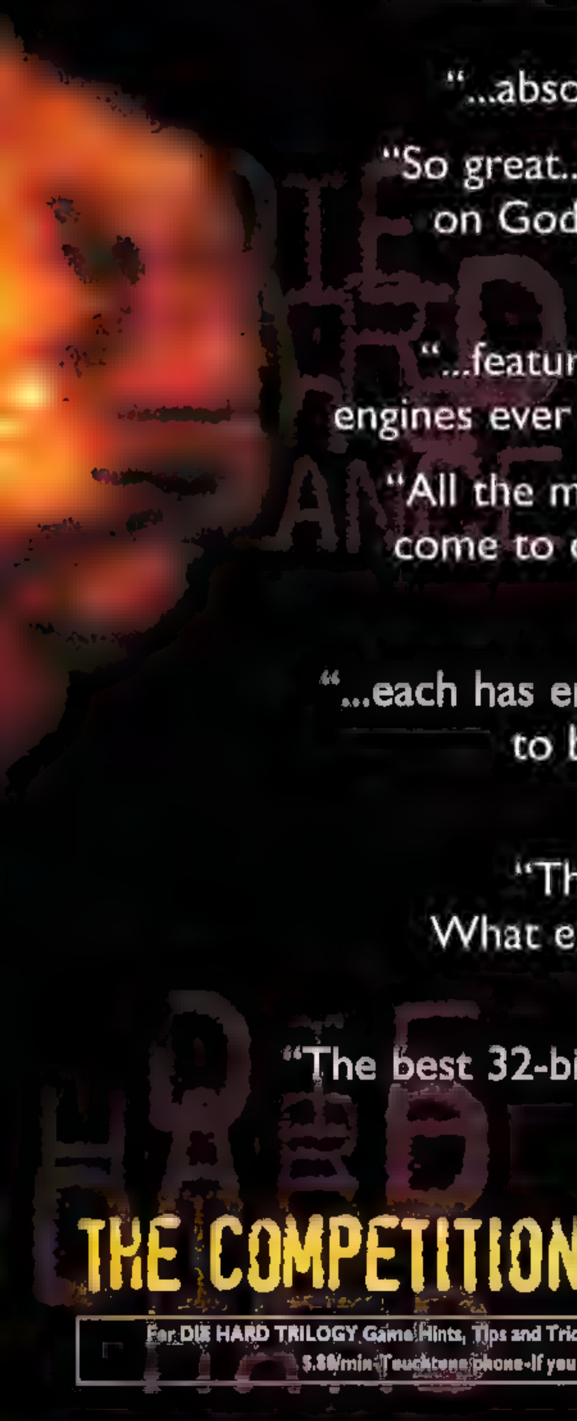
★★★★½
– Computer Gaming World



DIE HARD

is losing morale, it may seek better cover independently, returning to your control only when it feels safe. Infantry movement is enhanced by "Mid-move Jump," where a unit may dismount from its carrier before the carrier stops.

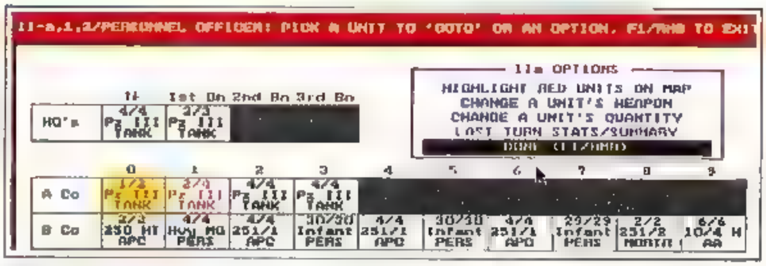
THE WHOLE EARTH CATALOG

However, the beauty of TIGERS 2.0 lies in its wealth of units: 772 kinds ranging from every variation of vehicle to every grade of infantry to the Soviet "anti-tank dogs" ("No, Rover! Find GERMAN tanks!") Aside from the major antagonists, the Finnish, Polish, Italian, Hungarian, and Rumanian armies are represented. Thus, using the scenario editor and the four pre-made maps or HPS' AIDE DE CAMP, any kind of engagement with any combination of variants can be constructed.

The downside of all this is TIGERS 2.0's graphics and sound. The maps are functional, if bland, but the unit icons pale beside STEEL PANTHERS. The IBM internal speaker sounds serve mainly to assure the program is still running. When a player gets into a battle, these elements are soon forgotten.

Although the AI is good, there is nothing like playing a human. The PBEM feature is easy. Indicate an PBEM game at the beginning and it's stored as PBMFILE.OPS. If you play several PBEM games at once, you'll need a "holding" subdirectory.

All of HPS' products are "works in progress." With Version 2.03, Tigers 2 is bugless, yet designer Scott Hamilton is always listening to gamers, refining and expanding his work. Campaign disks are on the way, and a post-1945 add-on to TIGERS II, BROKEN ALLIANCE has been released. Sooner or later, all serious WWII gamers will play TIGERS 2.0; you're better off doing it sooner.



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II-a,1,2/PERSONNEL OFFICER: PICK A UNIT TO 'GOTO' OR AN OPTION. F1/TAB TO EXIT

                                        ─── IIa OPTIONS ───
        II    1st Bn 2nd Bn 3rd Bn       HIGHLIGHT RED UNITS ON MAP
 HQ's   4/4    2/2                       CHANGE A UNIT'S WEAPON
        Pz III Pz III                    CHANGE A UNIT'S QUANTITY
        TANK   TANK                      LAST TURN STATS/SUMMARY
                                               DONE (F1/TAB)
         0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9
 A Co   1/2    2/4    4/4    4/4
        Pz III Pz III Pz III Pz III
        TANK   TANK   TANK   TANK
 B Co   2/2    4/4    4/4    30/30  4/4    30/30  4/4    29/29  2/2    6/6
        250 HT Hvy MG 251/1  Infant 251/1  Infant 251/1  Infant 251/2  10/4 H
        APC    PERS   APC    PERS   APC    PERS   APC    PERS   MORTR  AA
```

PROS TALK LOGISTICS Even though it's really tactics that we all love, you'll still appreciate the very functional, if Spartan, orders interface, where you can group formations, set firing ranges, and change weapons if applicable.

Mechanics Of A Skirmish

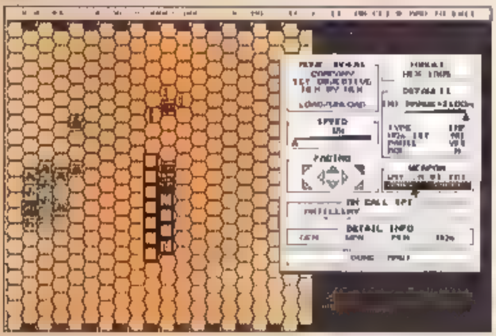
This exercise represents a German mopping-up exercise in 1941. A company of PzKw IIIf tanks, reinforced by a company of panzer grenadiers in half-tracks, attacks a company of T-34/76s dug in on a hill. The Germans have superior morale and training but their tanks are very inferior to the Soviets'. The German 37mm armor piercing shells penetrate the T-34's 41mm side armor only at 700 meters while the Russian 76mm can pierce the German frontal 32mm armor at well over 1000 meters.

Because of the difference in armor and weapons, the Russians must be flanked. I set the fire range of a panzer platoon to 500 meters to ensure no premature firing. I then moved it hex-by-hex around the hill, taking advantage of terrain contours so it could get in a shot during the "Ambush/Defensive" phase and avoid simultaneous return fire in the "Direct Fire" phase. The other armor units were given objective movement orders straight up the hill to distract the Russians. The infantry advanced as a company in a line while the mortar fired smoke.

The first two turns went well for the Germans; Russian fire was ineffectual and movement went as ordered. However the mortar fired all 12 of its smoke rounds in the second artillery phase and would have to be moved in order to target Russian positions with HE.

The fourth turn signaled disaster. The command platoon of the PzKw III company, having advanced with its outfit, was destroyed in sight of the flanking platoon. This platoon's morale sank from 89 to 66. The lack of a company HQ meant that the command delay became 11 turns instead of the normal six. Other platoons began to take losses as the German AP shells bounced off the Russian armor.

On the fifth turn, the Russians discovered the flanking platoon and destroyed one of its four tanks. Having grave morale problems, the Germans popped smoke automatically and ran. The moral to this is it takes more than skill and spirit to overcome thick armor, small silhouettes, and high muzzle velocity. Once again, HPS shows that it has some of the best AI in the business—and the computer doesn't cheat.



SMOKE GETS IN YOUR EYES And hopefully in your opponent's eyes, too. When your morale drops, as the Germans' did here, don't be stubborn: cover your tracks, fall back, and regroup.

APPEAL: For anyone needing a hefty dose of realism, but without the time to play, say, PACIFIC WAR.

PROS: The most realistic WWII tactical game on the market gets even better with improved AI and interface. Great scenarios, wonderful morale system.

CONS: Even with the upgrade, graphics are workmanlike at best, while sound is poor. The learning curve is still very intimidating, even for veteran gamers.

CG RATED ★★★★

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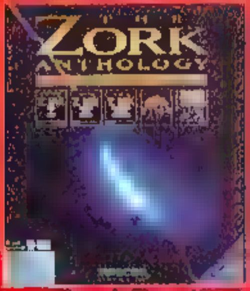

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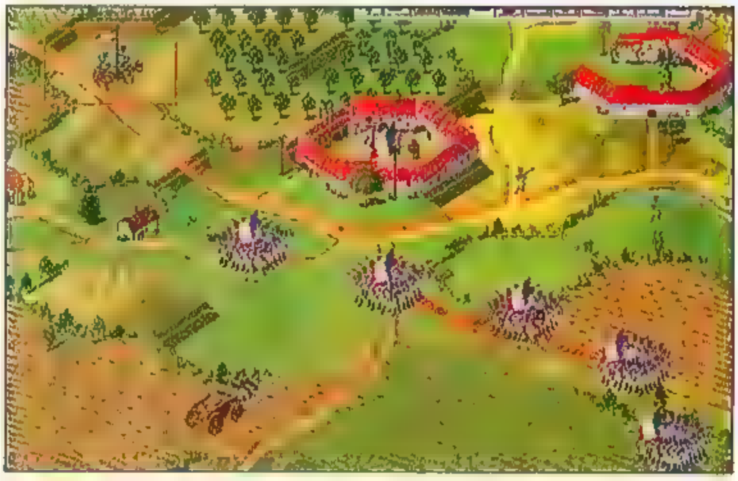
CIRCLE READER SERVICE #371

On Napoleonic Warfare

How Clausewitz Can Help You Win At Waterloo

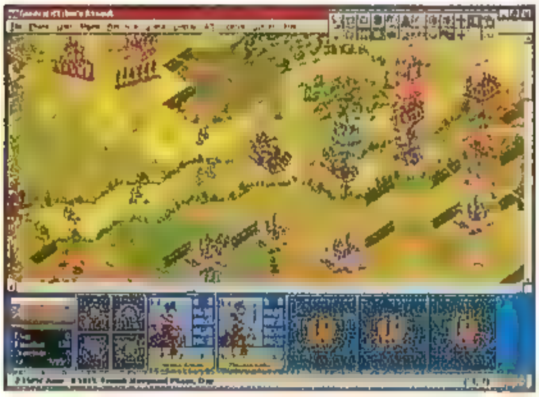
by Patrick C. Miller

Carl von Clausewitz is best known for writing *On War*, a work widely quoted and studied in military and political circles for the strategic principles of warfare it articulates. He was not only a military theorist but also a soldier who served as an officer with the Prussian and Russian armies throughout much of the Napoleonic Wars. During the Hundred Days Campaign in 1815 that climaxed with the battle of Waterloo, Clausewitz was chief of staff to General Johann von Thielmann, commander of the Prussian III Corps that fought at Ligny and Wavre.



TIP **YOU'RE SO SQUARE** The AI overreacts to cavalry's presence by forming its infantry into squares, creating a target-rich environment. It's unlikely that a skilled human opponent will make the same mistake.

Unfortunately, the more current translations of *On War* deal primarily with the portions of Clausewitz's writing that remain relevant, omitting sections on tactical warfare in the early 19th century. Although this information might be of little interest to contemporary strategists, it is *very* useful to war gamers playing TalonSoft's BATTLEGROUND: WATERLOO. Whether you play the French or the Allies and whether you're up against a computer or human opponent, Clausewitz's observations on the deployment and use of troops provide useful tactical guidelines. Without effective tactics, the most brilliant strategy won't secure a victory at Waterloo. Here are some of Clausewitz's thoughts on Napoleonic tactical combat and how they can be applied to the game.



TIP **GUNS UP FRONT** Here, artillery batteries follow up the French success in driving Allied infantry off Wellington's famous ridge at Waterloo. Using the line-of-sight tool can help you find the best spot to post your artillery.

ORGANIZATION

> **"An order of battle, that is, a method of drawing up the troops before and during the battle, must be established for the whole campaign."**

An essential aspect of Waterloo is understanding the organization and command structures of Napoleonic armies. Ignoring these invites disorder, leading to increased casualties and morale failures. To learn which units a leader commands, select the leader and then, from the pull-down Display menu, select Show Organization (or click on the toolbox icon). This highlights the bases of all units under that leader's command. You can also right click on a selected leader or a unit to view information on its organizational hierarchy.

MORALE

> **"...belligerents do not cease to be men, and individuals can never be converted into machines having no will of their own...It is, therefore, quite impossible to calculate beforehand all that is to take place."**

Morale is the intangible element of Waterloo that often leads to unpredictable results. There is no way to prevent morale failures, but you can reduce the chances that they'll occur by using your leaders and paying attention to the conditions

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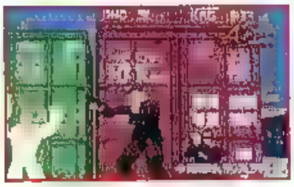

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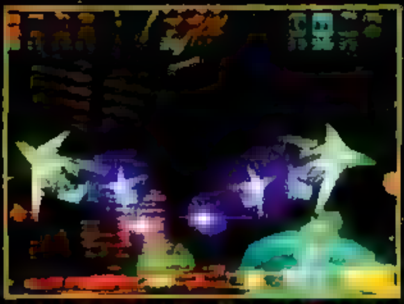
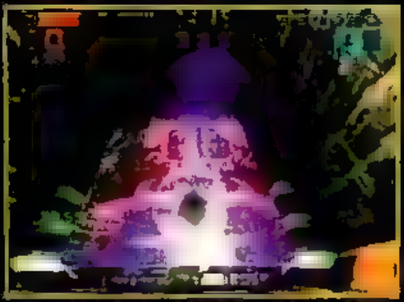
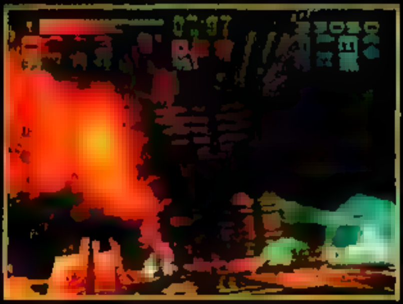


ENEMY WEAPONS SCREAM DEATH DOWN THE BLACK CORRIDORS!



HAUNTING LIGHT SOURCING AND SCALING!



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instruments of
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tomb.

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CIRCLE READER SERVICE #233

that reduce unit morale. Always try to keep units from the same regiments, brigades, divisions and corps together and spread leaders among the units under their command. Units without leaders stacked in their hexes, that are fatigued or disordered and that are low on ammunition or have been fired into from the flank, are more likely to fail morale checks.

ARTILLERY

> **"The battle is commenced by artillery. Artillery is used in large masses brought together at single points. Twenty or thirty guns defend the principle point in one great battery, or batter the point in the enemy's line which it is intended to attack."**

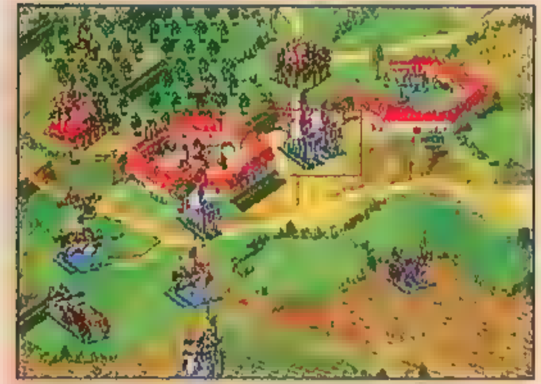
Although artillery's primary advantage is its long reach, the closer it is, the more effective it becomes. Don't use your batteries as static weapons and don't waste precious ammunition firing at far-off targets. Blasting infantry squares and columns or cavalry from medium to short range provides better results. Use the line-of-sight feature to determine which hexes offer the best fields of fire and move artillery into those hexes. Napoleon once cleared the streets of Paris "with a whiff of grapeshot," and ever after, massed artillery to defend important objectives. After bombarding the enemy, always move some batteries forward to support your attack. Timely artillery support is often the difference between an attack breaking through or bogging down.

SKIRMISHING

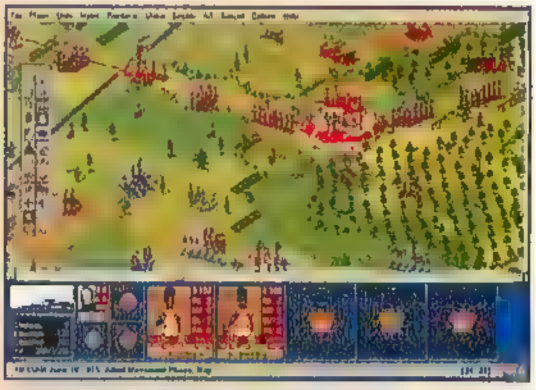
> **"If we can maintain an equal fight with...skirmishers, and that there is no reason for hastening...we should do wrong to hurry forward other forces; we should weary out the enemy with this kind of fight as much as possible."**

When attacking, use skirmishers to screen advancing infantry and cavalry formations, to probe enemy defenses and to soften up enemy formations with harassing fire prior to launching an attack. On the defensive, skirmishers serve best as a buffer between formed friendly units and enemy skirmishers. They are also excellent for defending wooded areas and buildings. Rifle-armed Allied skirmishers have a six-

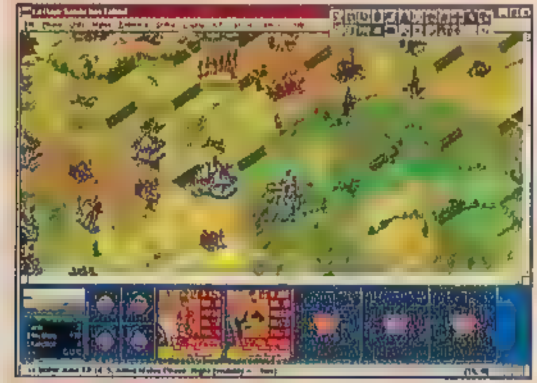
Adapting Tactics To The Situation



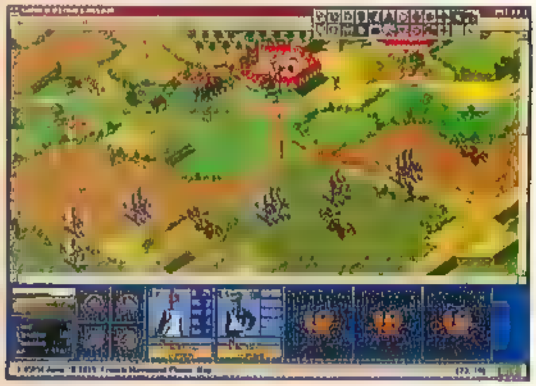
WINNING COMBINATION Infantry, cavalry and artillery must work together to create and exploit opportunities for one another. Note how the cavalry has forced Allied infantry into square, giving skirmishers and artillery an excellent target



FORM LINE HERE To bolster a threatened flank, the Allied infantry moves up quickly in column and then deploys into line. The artillery backs the line while skirmishers keep the French *legere* at bay.



DECIDEDLY RESERVED Near the end of a hard-fought battle in which both sides are exhausted and disordered, even a small reserve of high-quality, relatively fresh troops can accomplish a great deal.



SEPARATION ANXIETY When there's not enough light infantry available for skirmishing, another option is to detach a company from a line battalion to fill in. Skirmishers work well for defending buildings and wooded areas.

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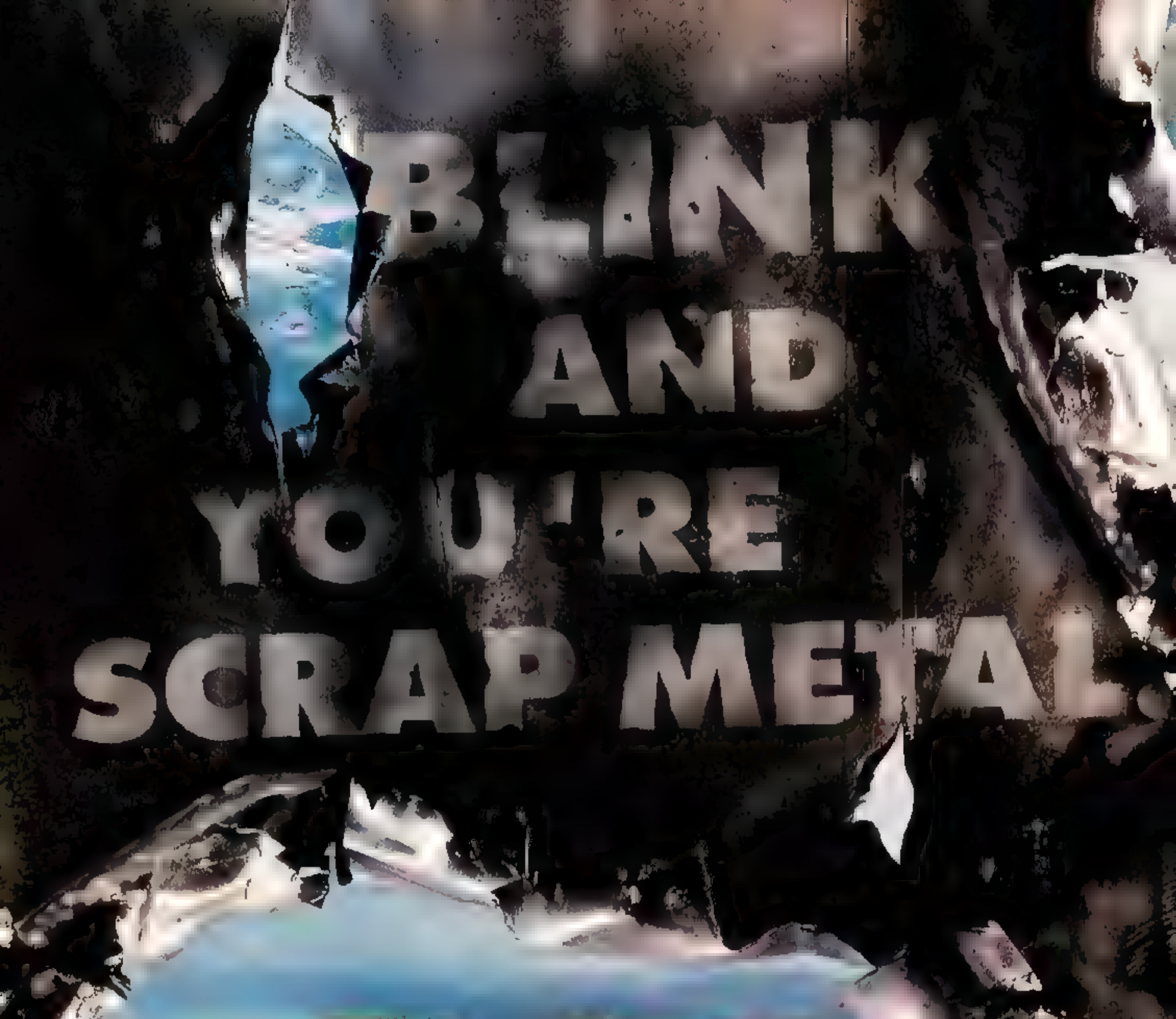

Eject from your HAWC, steal another. Bot-jacking is relatively legal here.

Wage war in everything from icy tundra to blistering desert. We suggest wearing layers.

Storm the enemy guard towers; try to avoid being turned into a red sinewy pile.

Destroy the enemy's HAWC delivery system and cut down on the number of missiles headed your way.

Communicate with wingmen via radio; share amusing anecdotes about global warfare.

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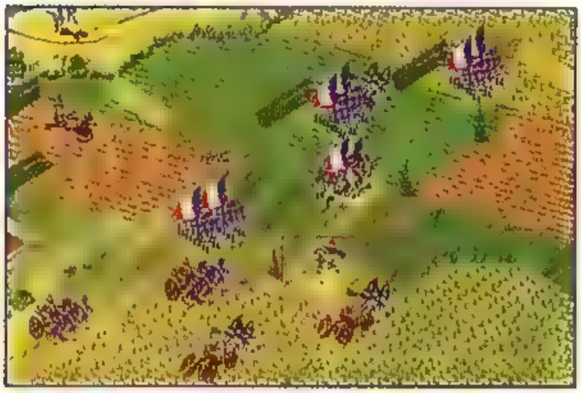
hex range, making them useful for picking off artillery crews. Skirmishers in the open are extremely vulnerable to cavalry attacks. Don't advance skirmishers too far ahead of your formed units. Also remember that placing more than 250 skirmishers in a hex cancels their defensive benefit from fire.



TIP **WHO'S IN CHARGE?** Knowing which leaders command which units is a key part of keeping troops operating at top efficiency. Highlighted bases show the units this leader commands and the text tells how he fits into the army's organization.

INFANTRY

> **"If the enemy brings so many troops into the combat as to overpower our line of skirmishers, or if we cannot delay any longer, we bring forward a full line of infantry, which deploys itself at 100 or 200 paces from the enemy, and either opens fire or advances to the attack."**

Of the two forms of combat in which infantry can engage, fire is preferable to melee. True, it's difficult to force enemy infantry out of buildings or woods without melee, and its use is sometimes necessary to drive back pesky skirmishers or to overrun artillery. But because melee always disorders and quickly fatigues your troops, it should be used only when you have the upper hand or as a last resort. Disorder is often your greatest enemy because it reduces your infantry's combat effectiveness, makes it more vulnerable and increases morale failures.

To avoid disorder, infantry should maneuver in column and fight in line. Placing units in column and line formation in the same hex or moving cavalry through an infantry hex will disorder the infantry. Deploy units from column into line just outside effective musketry range (two hexes). Carefully check the terrain around infantry units in line before moving them. Hedges and embankments will throw them into disorder. Remember that Prussian and French infantry receive a bonus for melee in column while British and British-trained infantry in extended line receive a firing bonus.

Finally, don't be overawed by the

power of cavalry. Against unsupported cavalry, forming square is infantry's best defense, but units in square can be quickly decimated by infantry and artillery fire. If your infantry is supported by cavalry and artillery, sometimes it's best to take your lumps from enemy cavalry and then counterattack. A few well-directed volleys at close range can turn a cavalry attack into a costly venture for your opponent.

CAVALRY

> **"...should not be launched boldly to the attack until disorder prevails in the enemy's ranks that we may hope for success by his hasty retreat."**

With its ability to charge and melee multiple hexes in a single turn, cavalry can cut a wide swath of destruction and quickly change the course of a battle. Therefore, it is tempting to place cavalry in the front lines, ready to charge any target of opportunity. While this tactic may meet with some success, it's more likely that your losses will exceed your gains, leaving you with no reliable cavalry when you need it most. Committing cavalry to the attack is easy, but extracting it can be difficult. Cavalry is at its best when used against disordered and fatigued enemy units, and it's far more effective when used in concert with supporting artillery and infantry. Before launching a cavalry charge, make certain that you have clear terrain all the way to the target hex. Crossing embankments or hedges will disorder your cavalry and greatly reduce their effectiveness.

TERRAIN

> **"...influences may be felt in the very smallest feature of the ground, but it can also dominate enormous areas."**

The Waterloo battlefield contains a deceptively wide variety of terrain. Hedges and road embankments will slow unit movement and disorder cavalry and infantry. To determine the type of terrain within a hex and around its edges, hold down the right mouse button on the terrain information box in the lower left corner of the screen. Hedges, walls, gates, woods and buildings provide varying degrees of defensive advantages against fire and melee. You can also use hills and ridges, as Wellington did, to screen your troops from enemy view and protect them from artillery bombardment.

In summary, to follow the "Clausewitz Plan," you should first mass artillery at the point of attack to soften the enemy line. Then advance Skirmishers to deliver fire and further weaken enemy units. Follow up with formed infantry, advancing either to contact the enemy in column or deploying in line to fire. Keep Cavalry close by to exploit disorder and weakness in the enemy's ranks. Finally, maintain a reserve of fresh troops to seal the victory. Properly employed, Clausewitz's tactical principles provide a sound base on which to build a winning strategy.

The 1996 Article Index

A Complete Index Of CGW Reviews, Previews, Features And Strategy Articles From 1996

The CGW All-Stars

The 1996 Five-Star Game Index

AGE OF RIFLES

Reviewed: November 96, p. 284
Publisher: SSI.
Game Type: Wargame
Pros: Captures the flair and fun of the era without compromising the history; over 40 different scenarios; robust editor; wonderful campaigns; excellent AI. A winner through and through.
Cons: Some PBEM bugs; merely adequate manual; stacking restrictions limit some scenarios.
Other Articles: The Grand Age of Warfare, Feature, Apr. 96, p. 58, Game Track, Feb. 9, p. 44; Big Game Hunt, Feature, Aug. 96, p. 96; Holiday Hot 100, Dec. 96, p. 209.

AH 64D LONGBOW

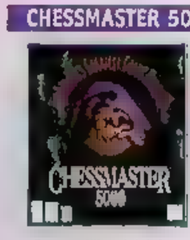
Reviewed: July 96, p. 164
Publisher: Jane's Combat Simulations/EA
Game Type: Simulations
Pros: Accurate, accessible, attractive, and action-packed. The benchmark by which future helicopter sims will be compared.
Cons: Multiplayer fans will have to wait for an add on, huge hard-drive footprint; yet another helicopter sim with no foliage.
Other Articles: 1996 Flight Sims Aim High, Feature, Mar. 96, p. 56; Strategy, Sept. 96, p. 192; Holiday Hot 100. Dec. 96. p. 152

BATTLEGROUND: SHILOH

Reviewed, October 96, p. 274
Publisher: Talonsoft
Game Type. Wargame
Pros. Challenging AI, fascinating scenarios, perfect music, interesting terrain and new gunboats make this the best BG yet.

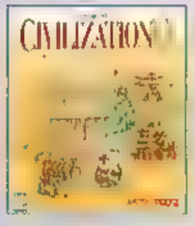
Cons. Some gamers won't like the necessary micro-management.
Other Articles: Big Game Hunt, Feature, Aug. 96, p. 96.

CHESSMASTER 5000



Reviewed: September 96, p. 159
Publisher: Mindscape
Game Type: Chess (Classics)
Pros. Wonderful tutorials, luscious graphics and the best array of computer opponents in the business, plus multiplayer support.
Cons: The MIDI music is lackluster. It would be nice to see a realistic rating system.
Other Articles: Big Game Hunt, Feature, Aug. 96, p. 74; Internet Attack!, Feature, Oct 96, p. 88, Holiday Hot 100, Dec. 96, p. 144.

CIVILIZATION II



Reviewed: June 96, p. 174
Publisher: MicroProse
Game Type: Strategy
Pros: Highly addictive, makes original Civ even better, scads of replay value, different enough to warrant buying.
Cons: No multiplayer mode; no way for computer to concede if you get way ahead early in the game.
Other Articles: On the Shelf, May 96, p. 32; Strategy, Aug. 96, p. 194

CONNECTIONS

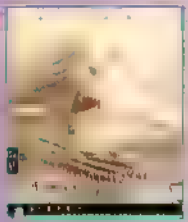
Reviewed: April 96, p. 157
Publisher: Discovery Channel Multimedia
Game Type: Puzzle
Pros: Perfectly captures the sense of wonder from the original TV series. The multimedia clips and acting are nice, and James

Burke is, well, James Burke. A wonderful challenge—the best pure puzzle game yet for the computer.
Cons: Even with the hints, there aren't many obvious solutions to the tough puzzles. Those wishing for a real adventure game may be slightly disappointed, but if you accept Connections for what it is, there isn't much else to dislike.

FANTASY GENERAL

Reviewed: June 96, p. 178
Publisher: SSI
Game Type: Strategy
Pros: Tons of cool units, great AI, nearly endless replay value; a strategy game that will make your brain work overtime.
Cons: The straightforward magic system may disappoint those expecting the depth of Master of Magic's arcane lore. The lack of scenario descriptions is annoying as well.
Other Articles: Hands On, Mar. 96, p.45.

GABRIEL KNIGHT 2



Reviewed: February 96, p.50
Publisher: Sierra On-Line
Game Type: Adventure
Pros: Great story, extravagant backgrounds, exceptional acting, and a near-perfect soundtrack makes this a graphic adventure benchmark.
Cons: Some puzzles may be obscure enough to seem unfair.
Other Articles: Scorpia's Hints & Tips, Mar. 96, p. 102; Premier Awards, June 96, p. 56.

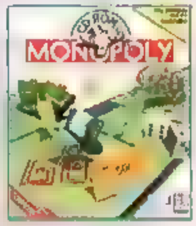
GRAND PRIX II

Reviewed: October 96, p. 246
Publisher: MicroProse
Game Type: Simulation
Pros: Beautiful textured graphics with fully functional rear-view mirrors, great AI with a human quality, excellent depiction of wheel spin, curbs that actually tilt the car, and many strong features brought up from World Circuit.
Cons: Drivers are based on the 1994 season, replay is far too short and comes with a bare minimum of camera angles, victory celebration is totally lame. It'll take a truly scorching processor to get all the graphics on, frame rate smooth and game speed up to par.
Other Articles: Hands On, July 96, p. 44.

INDY CAR RACING II

Reviewed: February 96, p. 74
Publisher: Papyrus
Game Type: Simulation
Pros: Crisp graphics with a better frame rate than NASCAR Racing, as well as cataclysmic collisions. Major improvements to opponent AI and car handling from the original IndyCar.
Cons: Road courses are nearly impossible without a wheel and pedal controller unit. Increased authenticity and difficulty may frustrate rookies. Is it too real?

MONOPOLY CD-ROM



Reviewed: February 96, p. 164
Publisher: Virgin/Westwood
Game Type: Classic
Pros: It really is Monopoly. Cool animation, the ability to build your own AI players; networking and Internet play are a big plus.
Cons: It really is Monopoly...and may not be exciting enough for those weaned on modern computer games.
Other Articles: Hints & Tips, Oct. 96, p. 204

PINBALL WORLD

Reviewed: May 96, p. 160
Publisher: 21st Century Entertainment
Game Type: Action
Pros: Everything is done right; this is the best pinball simulator on the market.
Cons: No table-warping, sub-games or strategy elements. This is for the pinball purist.

QUAKE

Reviewed: October 96, p. 174
Publisher: id Software
Game Type: Action
Pros: Pure action shooter; cool 3D architecture and creatures; outstandingly moody atmosphere; multiplayer mayhem second to none.
Cons: Requires a muscular Pentium; the non-interactive environment is a letdown after Duke Nukem 3D. The soundtrack is lousy compared to Doom's.
Other Articles: Game Track, Feb. 96, p. 44; Cover Story, July p. 46; Action Column, July 96, p. 103, Big Game Hunt, Aug. 96, p. 48; Multiplayer Strategies, Sept. 96, p. 66; Quake Deathmatch Strategy, Sept. 96, p. 142.
Also, monthly in The Quake Page: Oct. 96, p. 178; Nov. 96, p. 212; Dec. 96, p. 314.

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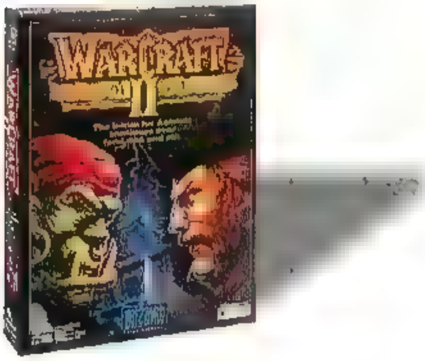
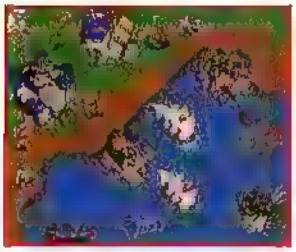
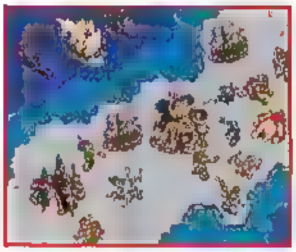
Game of the Year.



#1 Selling PC Game, Jan-April 1996 PC Data Report • **Game of the Year,** PC Gamer • **Multiplayer Game of the Year,** PC Gamer • **Golden Triad Award,** Computer Game Review • **Game of the Year,** Computer Gaming World Readers' Choice • **Best On-line Game,** C/NET


8 Players Head to Head

Battle over land, sea and air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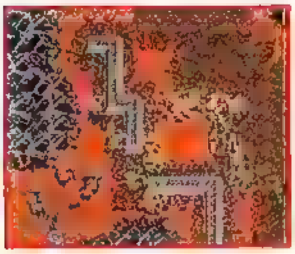
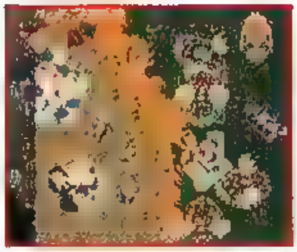


2 New Story Lines!

24 New Scenarios!



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Bruce Jenner's						

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Game Type	Key	Article Type	Key	Article Type	Key
Action	AC	Column	CO	Premier Awards	PA
Adventure	AD	Cheats & Hacks	CH	Read Me	RM
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Strategy	ST	Now Playing	NP	Strategy	ST
Various	VA	On the Shelf	OTS	Tips and Hints	TH
Wargame	WG			Not Applicable	NA

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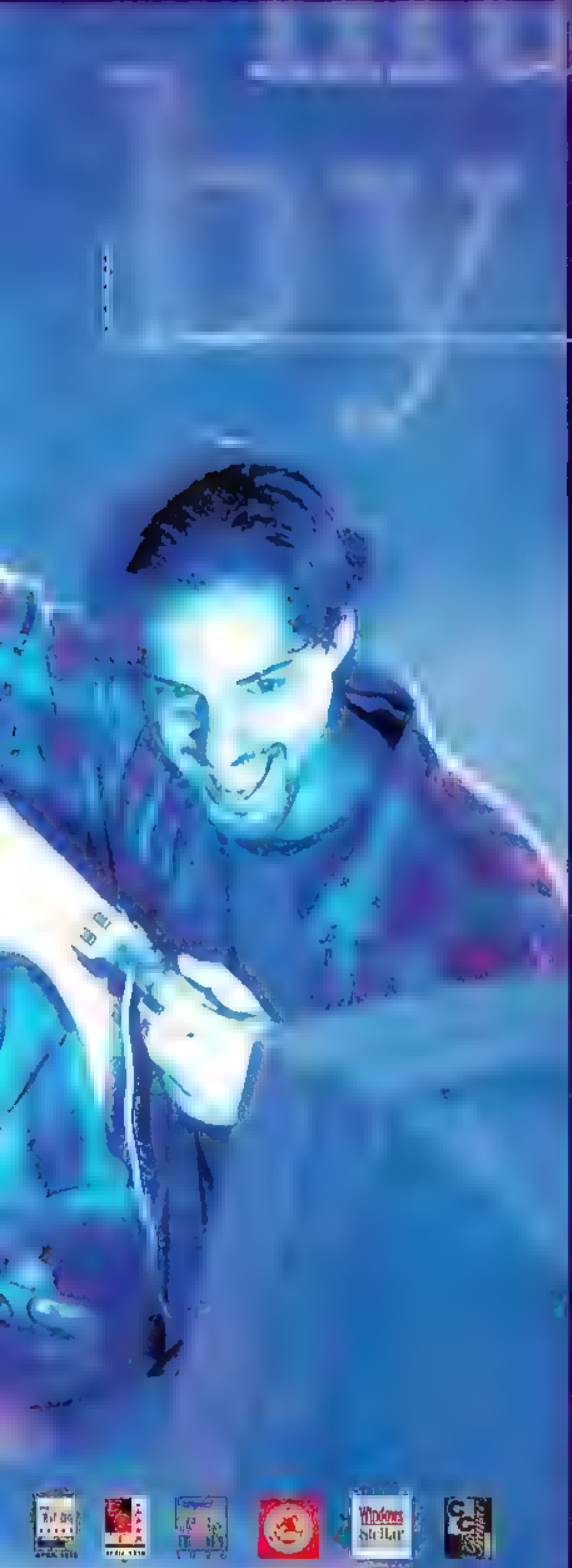

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EF 2000 TactCom	Oct	239	NA	Ocean	SI	CO
Elder Scrolls: Daggerfall	Aug.	58	NA	Bethesda	RPG	FE
Elder Scrolls: Daggerfall	Oct.	63	NA	Bethesda	RPG	HO
Elder Scrolls: Daggerfall	Nov	34	NA	Bethesda	RPG	OTS
Elder Scrolls: Daggerfall	Dec.	281	****1/2	Bethesda	RP	CO
Elder Scrolls: Daggerfall	Dec.	296	NA	Bethesda	RP	TH
Elk Moon Murder	Oct.	144	**	Activision	RPG	RE
Empire II	Jan.	165	NA	New World	WG	ST
Empire II	April	60	NA	New World	WG	FE
Endorfun	Mar.	166	**1/2	Time Warner	CP	RE
Entomorph	Jan.	201	NA	SSI	RPG	SR
Entomorph	Feb.	112	NA	SSI	RPG	SM
Entomorph	April	126	NA	SSI	RPG	SM
Entomorph	Oct.	142	NA	SSI	RPG	SM
Escher Interactive	Sept.	168	****	Byron Preiss	CP	RE
ESPN Extreme Games	April	35	NA	Sony	SP	OTS
European Airwar	Aug.	76	NA	MicroProse	SI	FE
Extreme Pinball	Jan.	254	NA	Electronic Arts	AC	RE
Eye of the Beholder II	June	105	NA	SSI	AD	SM
Eye of the Beholder II	Aug.	116	NA	SSI	AD	SM
F-16 Fighting Falcon	Feb.	44	NA	Interact Mag'c	SI	RM
F-22 Lightning II	July	42	NA	NovaLogic	SI	OTS
F-22 Lightning II	Aug	76	NA	NovaLogic	SI	FE
F-22 Lightning II	Sept.	51	NA	NovaLogic	SI	FE
F-22 Lightning II	Dec.	382	***	NovaLogic	SI	RE
F/A-18 Hornet 2.0	Aug	77	NA	Graphic Sim's.	SI	FE
F/A-18 Hornet 3.0	Nov.	52	NA	Graphic Sim's.	SI	HO
Falcon 4.0	Aug.	76	NA	MicroProse	SI	FE
Falcon 4.0	Oct.	35	NA	Spectrum H	SI	OTS
Falcon NW	Dec	68	****1/2	Falcon NW	HD	FE
Fantasy General	Mar	45	NA	SSI	WG	HO
Fantasy General	June	178	*****	SSI	WG	RE
Fast Attack	June	162	***	Sierra	SI	RE
Fields of Glory	April	67	NA	Spectrum H	WG	FE
FIFA Soccer 96	July	92	NA	Electronic Arts	SP	FE
Fighter Duel	Jan.	284	NA	Philips	SI	CO
Fighter Duel	Jan	290	****	Philips	SI	RE
Fighter Duel	July	161	NA	Philips	SI	CO
Fighter Duel II	Mar.	56	NA	Jaeger Software	SI	FE
Fire Fight	Oct.	192	***	Electronic Arts	AC	RE
Flight Commander II	April	184	NA	Avalon Hill	WG	CO
Flight Unlimited	June	66	NA	Looking Glass	SI	PA
Fly Fishing	July	92	NA	Gametek	SP	FE
Flying Corps	Nov.	264	NA	Empire	SI	SP
Flying Nightmares 2	Mar.	54	NA	Domark	SI	FE
Foxhunt	May	46	NA	Activision	AD	OTS
FPS Baseball Pro 96	July	79	NA	Sierra	SP	SP
FPS Baseball Pro 96	Aug	84	NA	Sierra	SP	FE
FPS Baseball Pro 96	Sept.	33	NA	Sierra	SP	OTS
FPS Baseball Pro 96	Oct.	220	*1/2	Sierra	SP	RE
FPS Football Pro	Mar.	242	NA	Sierra	SP	HOF
FPS Football Pro	Oct.	90	NA	Sierra	SP	FE
FPS Football Pro 96	Mar.	176	****	Sierra	SP	CO
FPS Football Pro 96	July	152	NA	Sierra	SP	ST
Frankenstein, Eyes of the Monster	Jan.	222	***	Amazing Media	RPG	RE
Frank Thomas Baseball	Oct.	232	*	Acclaim	SP	RE
Full Count Baseball	July	76	NA	Lance Haffner	SP	FE
Full Tilt! Pinball	Jan.	253	NA	Maxis	AC	RE
Gabriel Knight 2	Feb.	60	*****	Sierra	AD	RE
Gabriel Knight 2	Mar.	102	NA	Sierra	AD	SM
Gabriel Knight 2	April	126	NA	Sierra	AD	SM
Gabriel Knight 2	June	56	NA	Sierra	AD	PA
Gabriel Knight 2	June	105	NA	Sierra	AD	SM
Gabriel Knight 2	Aug.	116	NA	Sierra	AD	SM
Gabriel Knight 2	Oct	142	NA	Sierra	AD	SM
Gadget	Jan.	236	*	Synergy Inc.	RPG	RE
Galactic Civ's. II	April	196	***	Stardock	ST	RE
Galapagos	Feb.	44	NA	Anark	AD	GT
Gateway Destination	Dec.	70	***1/2	Gateway 2000	HD	FE
Gearheads	June	44	NA	Philips Media	CP	RE
Gender Wars	Nov.	207	***	GT Interactive	AC	RE
Genghis Khan II	April	183	NA	Koei	WG	CO
Grand Prix II	July	44	NA	MicroProse	SI	HO
Grand Prix II	Oct.	246	*****	MicroProse	SI	RE
Grand Prix Manager	Mar.	36	NA	Spectrum H.	SP	OTS
Grand Prix Manager	April	166	***	Spectrum H	SP	RE
Great Naval Battles	Mar.	224	**1/2	SSI	WG	RE
HIZone	May	46	NA	Wizard Works	AC	OTS
Hardball 5	Jan.	274	***1/2	Accolade	SP	RE
Harpoon	Oct.	96	NA	Kesmai	WG	FE
Havoc	June	44	NA	Reality Bytes	AC	OTS
Hellbender	Dec.	326	***	Microsoft	AC	RE
Heroes of M&M	Jan.	116	NA	New World	ST	ST
Heroes of M&M	May	46	NA	New World	ST	OTS
Heroes of M&M	June	64	NA	New World	ST	PA
Heroes of M&M II	Aug.	91	NA	New World	ST	FE

Game Type	Key	Article Type	Key	Article Type	Key
Action	AC	Column	CO	Premier Awards	PA
Adventure	AD	Cheats & Hacks	CH	Read Me	RM
Classics/Puzzles	CP	Department	DE	Review	RE
Other	OT	Feature	FE	Scorpia's Hints	SH
Role-Playing	RP	Game Track	GT	Scorpia's Mail	SM
Simulation	SI	Hardware	HD	Scorpia Review	SR
Sports	SP	Hall of Fame	HOF	Sneak Preview	SP
Strategy	ST	Now Playing	NP	Strategy	ST
Various	VA	On the Shelf	OTS	Tips and Hints	TH
Wargame	WG			Not Applicable	NA

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Heroes of M&M II	Nov.	48	NA	New World	ST	HO
Hexen	Jan.	336	NA	Raven	AD	CO
Hexen	Feb.	151	NA	Raven	AD	CO
Hind	Mar	62	NA	Interact. Magic	SI	SP
Hind	Dec	34	NA	Interact. Magic	SI	OTS
Hi Octane	Feb.	70	NA	Bullfrog	AC	FE
History of the World	April	46	NA	Avalon Hill	GT	
The Hive	Feb.	144	***	Trimark	AC	RE
Hoyle Solitaire	Dec.	333	NA	Sierra On-Line	CP	CO
Hyper 3-D Pinball	Mar	37	NA	Virgin	AC	OTS
Ice Breaker	Feb.	40	NA	20th Century	RM	
IF-22 Lightning	Sept.	52	NA	MicroProse	SI	FE
I Have No Mouth...	Mar.	118	****1/2	Cyberdreams	AD	RE
I Have No Mouth...	May	111	NA	Cyberdreams	AD	SM
I Have No Mouth...	June	58	NA	Cyberdreams	AD	PA
I Have No Mouth..	June	105	NA	Cyberdreams	AD	SM
I Have No Mouth...	Aug.	116	NA	Cyberdreams	AD	SM
iM1A2 Abrams	Dec.	366	NA	Interact. Magic	SI	SP
Indiana Jones						
Desktop Adventures	Aug.	128	*	LucasArts	AD	RE
Indy Car II	Feb.	74	*****	Papyrus	SI	RE
Into the Shadows	July	42	NA	GT Interactive	AC	GT
Into the Shadows	Aug.	48	NA	GT Interactive	AC	FE
Iron & Blood	Oct.	164	NA	Take 2/Acclaim	AC	SP
Island Casino	April	42	NA	GT Interactive	CP	OTS
Jack Nicklaus Golf	Oct.	217	NA	Accolade	SP	CO
Jack the Ripper	June	112	****	Gametek	AD	RE
Jagged Alliance:						
Deadly Games	Oct.	98	NA	Sir-Tech	ST	FE
Jagged Alliance:						
Deadly Games	Dec.	398	****	Sir-Tech	ST	RE
Jagged Alliance:						
DG Online	Nov	38	NA	Sir-Tech	ST	OTS
Jedi Knight	July	42	NA	LucasArts	AC	GT
Jedi Knight	Oct.	48	NA	LucasArts	AC	GT
Jedi Knight II:						
Dark Forces	Aug.	48	NA	LucasArts	AC	FE
Jet Fighter III	Jan.	286	NA	Mission Studios	SI	CO
Jet Fighter III	Mar.	54	NA	Mission Studios	SI	FE
Jet Fighter III	Sept.	56	NA	Mission Studios	SI	FE
John Madden 97	July	75	NA	Electronic Arts	SP	FE
John Madden 97	Aug.	86	NA	Electronic Arts	SP	FE
Jurassic Park	Dec.	48	NA	DreamWorks	AD	SP
Knight Moves	Feb.	166	***	Spectrum H.	CP	RE
Lands of Lore	Feb.	112	NR	Virgin	RPG	SM
Lands of Lore	Oct.	142	NA	Virgin	RPG	SM
Lands of Lore II	Aug.	58	NA	Virgin	RPG	FE
Leisure Suit Larry 7	May	48	NA	Sierra	AD	GT
Leisure Suit Larry 7	Aug.	54	NA	Sierra	AD	FE
Lemmings Paintball	Oct.	210	****	Psygnosis	CP	RE
Links LS	Oct.	39	NA	Access	SP	OTS
Links LS	Nov	240	****1/2	Access	SP	RE
Links Pro CD	July	88	NA	Access	SP	FE
Light House	Dec	38	NA	Sierra	AD	OTS
Lion	April	39	NA	Sanct. Woods	RPG	OT
Locus	April	154	*	GT Interactive	AC	RE
M1A2 Abrams	Aug	77	NA	Interact. Magic	SI	FE
Magic: The Gathering	April	46	NA	Acclaim	RPG	GT
Marathon 2						

Game Name	Issue	Page	Rating	Publisher	Game Type	Article Type
The Durandal	Mar.	154	****1/2	Bungie	AC	RE
Martian Chronicles	Jan.	228	*	Byron Preiss	RPG	RE
Master of Antares	Jan.	298	NA	MicroProse	ST	SP
Master of Orion	April	220	NA	MicroProse	ST	HOF
Master of Orion	Aug.	90	NA	MicroProse	ST	FE
Master of Orion II	Oct.	49	NA	MicroProse	ST	HO
Master of Orion II	Oct.	96	NA	MicroProse	ST	FE
Maurice Ashley Chess	May	167	NA	Davidson	CP	CO
MDK	Aug.	50	NA	Shiny	AC	FE
MechWarrior 2	Jan.	92	NA	Activision	SI	ST
MechWarrior 2	Jan.	340	NA	Activision	SI	CO
MechWarrior 2	May	74	NA	Activision	SI	ST
MechWarrior 2	June	62	NA	Activision	SI	PA
MechWarrior 2	Aug.	78	NA	Activision	SI	FE
MechWarrior 2	Sept.	74	NA	Activision	SI	SP
MechWarrior 2	Oct.	94	NA	Activision	SI	FE
MW 2 Expansion Pack	Feb.	202	****	Activision	SI	RE
MW 2: Mercenaries	Dec.	380	****1/2	Activision	SI	RE
MW 2: Pentium Edition	Mar.	36	NA	Activision	SI	OTS
MechWarrior 3	Aug.	34	NA	Activision	SI	RM
Meridian 59	July	44	NA	Archetype	RPG	GT
Meridian 59	Aug.	68	NA	3DO	RPG	FE
Meridian 59	Oct.	76	NA	3DO	RPG	FE
Might and MagicVI	Nov.	45	NA	New World	ST	GT
Mind Grind	Dec.	336	**	Microforum	CP	RE
Mission Critical	May	120	****1/2	Legend	AD	RE
Mission Critical	Sept.	124	NA	Legend	AD	SR
Mission Force:						
Cyberstorm	Mar.	44	NA	Sierra	ST	GT
Mission Force:						
Cyberstorm	May	212	NA	Sierra	ST	SP
Mission Force:						
Cyberstorm	Sept.	38	NA	Sierra	ST	OTS
Mission Force:						
Cyberstorm	Oct	284	***1/2	Sierra	ST	RE
Monopoly	Feb.	164	*****	Westwood	CP	RE
Monopoly	Oct.	204	NA	Westwood	CP	TH
Monster Truck Mad.	Sept.	46	NA	Microsoft	AC	GT
Monster Truck Mad.	Dec.	43	NA	Microsoft	AC	OTS
Monty Python	Aug.	74	NA	7th Level	CP	FE
Monty Python	Aug.	157	NA	7th Level	CP	CO
Monty Python's						
Complete Waste	June	46	NA	7th Level	CP	OTS
Mortal Kombat 3	Jan.	138	NA	GT Interactive	AC	ST
Mortal Kombat 3	Jan.	242	****	GT Interactive	AC	RE
Mummy	Dec.	306	***	Interplay	AD	RE
NASCAR 2	Nov.	45	NA	Sierra	SI	HO
NASCAR 2	Dec.	376	NA	Sierra	SI	SP
NASCAR Racing						
League	Sept.	173	NA	Papyrus	SP	CO
Navy Strike	Feb.	32	NA	Empire	SI	HO
NBA Full Court Press	Aug.	86	NA	Microsoft	SP	FE
NBA Full Court Press	Sept	42	NA	Microsoft	SP	HO
NBA Live 96	Mar	171	NA	Electronic Arts	SP	CO
NBA Live 96	June	60	NA	Electronic Arts	SP	CO
NBA Live 96	July	81	NA	Electronic Arts	SP	SP
NBA Live 97	Oct	217	NA	Electronic Arts	SP	CO
NCAA Basketball	Feb.	46	NA	GTE Interactive	SP	GT
NCAA Basketball	Aug	86	NA	GTE Interactive	SP	FE

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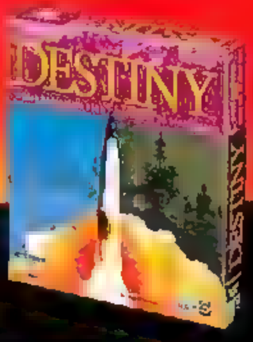
M1A2
ABRAMS

So Little Time

Pulverize Union or Confederate armies as you decide the fate of the Nation. Called "The only strategic Civil War game worth playing" by *Computer Gaming World*, American Civil War includes a multimedia history of the Civil War.

Fire harpoon and tomahawk missiles at enemy battleships and carriers [illegible] Navy's most powerful ships. It's Harpoon® Classic 97, from the award winning designers of Harpoon Classic, voted "Wargame of the Year" by PC Gamer.

Dominate the world as you build a nation through military and scientific discovery. Destiny™ is the multi-player strategy game where you civilize and conquer the world, from the Stone Age to the Space Age.



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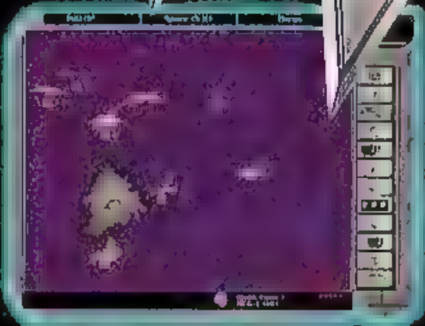

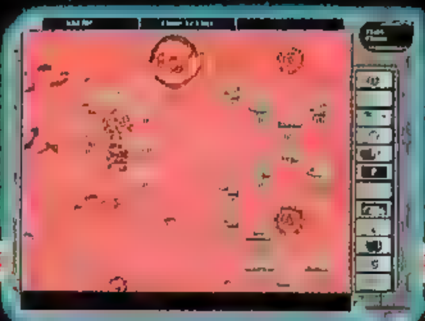

Game Name	Issue	Page	Rating	Publisher	Game Type	Article Type
Need for Speed, The	Feb.	64	NA	Electronic Arts	AC	FE
Need for Speed, The	Sept.	68	NA	Electronic Arts	AC	FE
Nemesis	June	48	NA	Sir-Tech	AD	GT
Neverhood Chronicles	Nov.	200	NA	DreamWworks	AD	SP
Neverhood Chronicles	Dec.	304	****	DreamWorks	AD	RE
NFL Legends	July	74	NA	Accolade	SP	SP
NFL Legends	Aug.	84	NA	Accolade	SP	FE
NFL Pro Football	Jan.	280	***1/2	IBM	SP	RE
NFL Pro Football	July	72	NA	IBM	SP	FE
NHL Hockey 96	Jan.	266	***1/2	Electronic Arts	SP	RE
NHL Hockey 96	July	85	NA	Electronic Arts	SP	FE
NHL Hockey 97	Aug.	84	NA	Electronic Arts	SP	FE
NHL Hockey 97	Dec.	344	****1/2	Electronic Arts	SP	RE
NHL Power Play 96	May	176	NA	Virgin	SP	SP
NHL Power Play 96	July	84	NA	Virgin	SP	FE
NHL Power Play 96	Oct.	230	****	Virgin	SP	RE
Nine Dragons	Nov.	227	****1/2	Nine Dragons	CP	RE
Normality	Oct.	40	NA	Interplay	AD	OTS
Normality	Nov.	175	NA	Interplay	AD	SR
Nuke It	Oct.	37	NA	Micro Star	AC	OTS
Obsidian	Sept.	41	NA	Rocket Science	AD	GT
Olympic Summer Games	July	92	NA	Eidos	SP	FE
Orion Burger	Feb.	44	NA	Sanct. Woods	AD	GT
Outlaws	Sept.	41	NA	LucasArts	AC	GT
Over the Reich	May	48	NA	Avalon Hill	WG	GT
Over the Reich	Aug	95	NA	Avalon Hill	WG	FE
Over the Reich	Aug	179	NA	Avalon Hill	WG	CO
Pandora Directive	Mar.	110	NA	Access Software	RPG	SP
Pandora Directive	Oct.	137	NA	Access Software	RPG	SR
Pandora Directive	Nov.	180	NA	Access Software	RPG	SM
Panzer General	April	184	NA	SSI	WG	CO
Panzer General	Nov.	277	NA	SSI	WG	CO
Panzer General Online	Dec.	387	****1/2	SSI	WG	CO
Perfect Weapon	Oct.	183	NA	ASC Games	AC	SP
PGA Tour 96	July	66	NA	Electronic Arts	SP	FE
Phantasmagoria 2	Aug.	56	NA	Sierra	AD	FE
Philip Marlowe: PI	Aug	34	NA	Byron Preiss	AD	OTS
Philip Marlowe: PI	Oct.	152	***	Byron Preiss	AD	RE
Pinball Illusions	Jan.	250	NA	Digital Illusions	AC	RE
Pinball World	May	160	*****	21st Century	AC	RE
Planetary Raiders	Aug.	173	NA	ICI	SI	CO
Pool Champion	Mar	188	****	Mindscape	SP	RE
Power: The Game	April	194	***1/2	IBM	ST	RE
PQ S.W.A.T.	Feb.	40	NA	Sierra	AC	RM
Pretty Good Solitaire	Dec.	334	NA	Tom Warfield	CP	CO
Prisoner of Ice	Jan.	206	NA	I-Motion	RPG	SR
Prisoner of Ice	Feb.	114	NA	I-Motion	RPG	SM
Prisoner of Ice	April	126	NA	I-Motion	RPG	SM
Prisoner of Ice	June	104	NA	I-Motion	RPG	SM
Privateer 2	Aug.	83	NA	Origin	SI	FE
Privateer 2	Oct.	244	NA	Origin	SI	SP
Psychic Detective	June	32	NA	Electronic Arts	AD	OTS
Psychic Detective	July	120	****	Electronic Arts	AD	RE
Psycho Pinball	Jan.	251	NA	Philips	AC	RE
Puzzle Power	July	143	NA	Centron	CP	CO
Puzzle Shop	Feb.	159	NA	Oracle	CP	CO
PYST	Nov	196	NA	Parroty	AD	SP
QIN	Mar.	46	NA	Time Warner	AD	HO
Quake	Feb.	44	NA	id	AC	GT
Quake	July	46	NA	id	AC	SP
Quake	July	103	NA	id	AC	CO
Quake	Aug.	48	NA	Id	AC	FE
Quake	Sept.	66	NA	Id	AC	FE
Quake	Oct.	174	*****	Id	AC	RE
Quake	Oct.	178	NA	Id	AC	CH
Quake	Nov.	212	NA	Id	AC	CH
Quake	Dec.	314	NA	Id	AC	TH
Quake DeathMatch	Sept.	142	NA	Id	AC	ST
Ravenloft II	Feb.	114	NA	SSI	RPG	SM
Ravenloft II	Oct.	142	NA	SSI	RPG	SM
The Raven Project	April	144	***	Mindscape	AC	RE
Rayman	April	35	NA	UBI Soft	AC	OTS
The Realm	Aug.	69	NA	Sierra	RPG	FE
The Realm	Oct.	76	NA	Sierra	RPG	FE
Realm of Arkania	Aug.	60	NA	Sir-Tech	RPG	FE
Rebel Assault II	Feb.	148	***	LucasArts	AC	RE
Red Alert	Aug.	91	NA	Virgin	ST	FE
Red Baron II	Mar.	55	NA	Sierra	SI	FE
Red Baron II	April	52	NA	Sierra	SI	SP
Red Storm Rising	April	184	NA	MicroProse	WG	CO
Remember the Alamo	April	64	NA	Incredible Sims	WG	FE
Return Fire	Dec.	330	***1/2	GT Interactive	AC	RE
Return of the Arcade	May	54	NA	Microsoft	AC	HO
Return to Krondor	July	43	NA	7th Level	RPG	GT
Return to Krondor	Aug.	58	NA	7th Level	RPG	FE
Return to Zork	Feb.	114	NA	Activision	AD	SM
Riddle of Master Lu	Jan.	216	****1/2	Sanct. Woods	RPG	RE
Riddle of Master Lu	May	136	NA	Sanct. Woods	RPG	TH
Ripper	April	47	NA	Take 2	RPG	HO
Ripper	June	99	NA	Take 2	RPG	SR
Ripper	July	109	NA	Take 2	RPG	SR
Ripper	Aug.	116	NA	Take 2	RPG	SM
Ripper	Oct.	142	NA	Take 2	RPG	SM
Rise 2: Resurrection	Oct.	186	**	Acclaim	AC	RE
Rise & Rule Of Ancient Empires	June	40	NA	Sierra	ST	OTS
Rise & Rule Of Ancient Empires	July	184	**	Sierra	ST	RE
Risk	Aug.	74	NA	Hasbro	CP	FE
Risk	Oct	88	NA	Hasbro	CP	FF
Road Warrior	Feb	72	NA	Gametek	AC	FE
Road Warrior	May	156	**1/2	Gametek	AC	RE
Robert E. Lee	April	59	NA	Sierra	WG	FE
Robert E. Lee	Nov	284	****	Sierra	WG	RE
Rolemaster: Magestorm	Oct.	76	NA	Interworld	RPG	FE
Romance of the						

Game Type	Key	Article Type	Key	Article Type	Key
Action	AC	Column	CO	Premier Awards	PA
Adventure	AD	Cheats & Hacks	CH	Read Me	RM
Classics/Puzzles	CP	Department	DE	Review	RE
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Simulation	SI	Hardware	HD	Scorpia Review	SR
Sports	SP	Hall of Fame	HOF	Sneak Preview	SP
Strategy	ST	Now Playing	NP	Strategy	ST
Various	VA	On the Shelf	OTS	Tips and Hints	TH
Wargame	WG			Not Applicable	NA

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Sabre Ace	Dec	357	NA	Eagle	S	CO
Saturday Night Live Goes Political	June	139	NA	Berkeley	CP	CO
Science Fiction Encyclopedia	Mar.	40	NA	Grolier	OT	OTS
Sci Fi Channel Trivia	Nov	232	**	Byron Preiss	CP	RE
Scrabble	Aug.	74	NA	Hasbro	CP	FE
Scrawny Set	Mar	168	***	Set Enterprises	CP	RE
Screamer	Feb	62	NA	Virgin	AC	FE
Screamer	Mar	160	****	Virgin	AC	RE
Settlers II	Nov	314	****	Blue Byte	ST	RE
Shadows Over Riva	July	43	NA	Sir Tech	RPG	HO
Shandoan	Oct	45	NA	Interplay	AD	OTS
Shannara	Feb	40	NA	Legend	AD	RM
Shannara	Aug	116	NA	Legend	AD	SM
Shattered Steel	Aug	42	NA	Interplay	AC	HO
Shattered Steel	Dec	40	NA	Interplay	AC	OTS
Shell Shock	July	127	NA	U.S. Gold	WG	CO
Shell Shock	Oct	40	NA	U.S. Gold	WG	OTS
Shell Shock	Nov.	218	***	Eidos	WG	RE
Shivers	Feb	36	NA	Sierra	OT	HO
Sid Meier's Civilization	Jan.	34	NA	MicroProse	ST	BB
Silent Hunter	June	158	****	Sierra	SI	RE
Silent Thunder: A-10	Jan.	35	NA	Dynamix	SI	BD
Silent Thunder: A-10	June	154	**	Sierra	SI	RE
SimCopter	Oct.	168	NA	Maxis	AC	SP
Sim Golf	July	86	NA	Maxis	SP	FE
SkyNet	Oct.	161	NA	Bethesda	AC	CO
Smart Games #1	July	146	****1/2	Smart Games	CP	RE
Smart Games #1	Oct.	204	NA	Smart Games	CP	TH
Space Bar, The	Aug.	56	NA	Rocket Science	AD	FE
Space Bucks	May	218	**1/2	Sierra	ST	RE
Sports Illustrated Micro. Baseball	Aug.	163	NA	Microleague	SP	CO
Spycraft	July	116	****1/2	Activision	AD	RE
Star Control 3	Oct	51	NA	Accolade	AD	HO
Star Control 3	Dec.	300	****	Accolade	AD	RE
Star Craft	Aug.	72	NA	Blizzard	ST	FE
Star Craft	Aug.	90	NA	Blizzard	ST	FE
Star Craft	Oct.	96	NA	Blizzard	ST	FE
Star General	June	46	NA	SS	ST	GT
Star General	Aug.	90	NA	SS	ST	FE
Star General	Sept	197	NA	SS	ST	CO
Star Rangers	Jan.	40	NA	Interact. Magic	SI	BB
Star Raiders	Feb	194	NA	Interact. Magic	S	RE
Star Trek: Final Unity	Feb.	112	NA	Spectrum H.	RPG	SM
Star Trek: Final Unity	April	126	NA	Spectrum H.	RPG	SM
Star Trek: Starfleet Academy	Aug.	78	NA	Interplay	S	FE
Star Trek: Starfleet Academy	Dec	52	NA	Interplay	SI	FE
Steel Panthers	Jan	172	NA	SSI	WG	ST
Steel Panthers	Jan	296	NA	SSI	WG	CO
Steel Panthers	Feb	228	NA	SSI	WG	ST
Steel Panthers	June	56	NA	SSI	WG	PA
Steel Panthers II	Aug	95	NA	SSI	WG	FE
Steel Panthers Campaign Disc	Oct	38	NA	SS	WG	OTS
Steel Panthers Campaign Disc	Nov	310	****	SSI	WG	RE
Stephen Spielberg's Director Chair	Nov	48	NA	Knowledge Adv.	ST	GT
Stonekeep	Jan.	41	NA	Interplay	RPG	BB
Stonekeep	Feb	122	****	Interplay	RPG	RE
Stonekeep	May	129	NA	Interplay	RPG	ST
Stonekeep	Aug	116	NA	Interplay	RPG	SM
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S T O R M	Nov	226	**1/2	American Soft.	AC	RE
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Strife	May	143	NA	Velocity	AC	CO
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SU 27	Feb	166	****	Mindscape	SI	RE
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SubSpace	Oct	83	NA	Virgin	AC	FE
Superheroes	April	46	NA	MicroProse	ST	GT
Super Street Fighter II	April	152	**	Capcom	AC	RE
Sword of Shannara	Mar	97	NA	Legend	AD	SR
TacOps	Aug.	186	**1/2	Arsenal	ST	RE
Tang Chi	Feb	33	NA	Capcom	OT	HO
TekWar	Jan.	239	**	Capstone	AC	RE
Ten Pin Alley	Oct	49	NA	American Soft	SP	HO
Terminator Future Shock	Feb	40	NA	Bethesda	AC	RM
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Terra Nova	Feb.	142	NA	Virgin	AC	SP
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Terror T.R.A.X.	Mar	40	NA	3 Prong Plug	AD	OTS
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The Dig	Jan	40	NA	LucasArts	AD	NP
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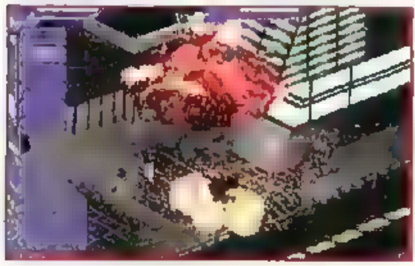

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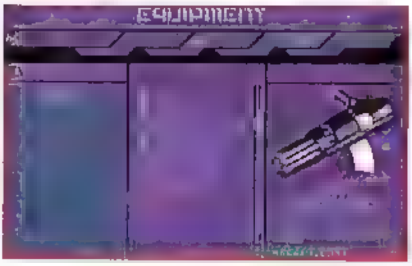

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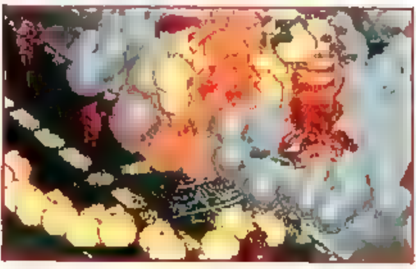

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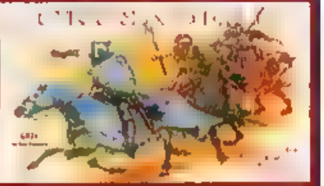

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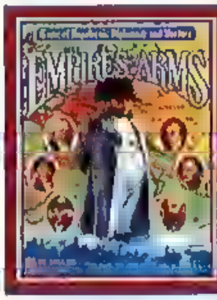

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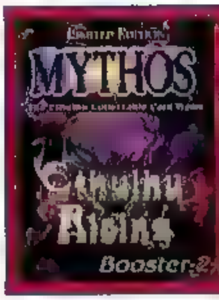

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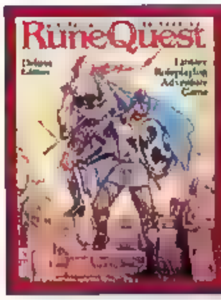

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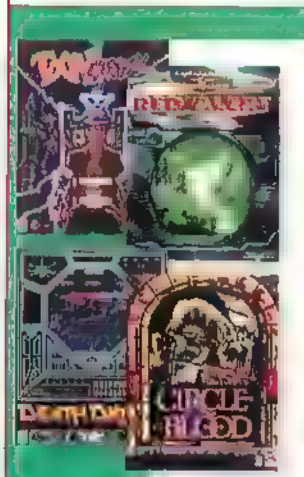

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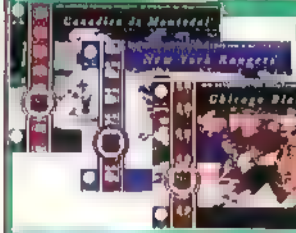

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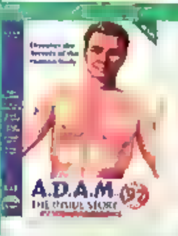

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COD4VGA

Welcome to the Cooperstown of Computer Games. Here, raised upon pedestals, you'll find the games that broke the records, established the benchmarks, and held gamers in delighted trances for untold hours.

EARL WEAVER BASEBALL

Electronic Arts, 1986

The original Earl Weaver Baseball stands out as the quintessential sports game, surpassed by only Front Page Sports Football, and many fans would argue even that comparison. The Amiga version brought digitized sounds, graphics that would not be surpassed on the IBM for many years to come, and animation that mirrored real kinesiology—years before other games turned to rotoscoping techniques for modeling players' on-field movements.

Because Earl Weaver was involved in the design, the computer managers actually have a clue of when to bring in that pinch hitter, when to bunt, and when to walk your best hitters. The first baseball game to use a physical model for resolving plays—a system less robust but much more successful than the later Front Page Sports Baseball—Earl Weaver Baseball managed to offer reasonable statistical accuracy without resorting to traditional stat-based mathematical models. In fact, the game played equally well in both action and management-only modes, a feat never repeated despite today's much better technology.

Earl Weaver also had incredible flexibility in drafting and editing players, and it was the first game to allow customization of stadiums and team uniforms. Unfortunately, the long-awaited sequel to the original game was a disappointment. But whatever the failings of its descendants, the original Earl Weaver Baseball will forever be remembered as a watershed design in sports simulations that raised the entire genre with its tide.

EMPIRE

Interstel, 1978

Back before the dawn of modern computer civilization, Walter Bright's original version of this grand strategic conquest game mixed exploration and strategy with a simple economic system for unit construction. But this simple diversion held the Most Addictive Game crown almost unchallenged before the advent of Sid Meier's Civilization, because of its simple yet elegant mechanics, deceptive depth of play, and unending replayability. After proliferating on college and corporate mainframes all through the 1970s, Empire found new life on the personal computer when ex-NASA programmer Mark Baldwin was approached by Interstel to create an Atari ST version.

Ostensibly a game of planetary conquest, complete with a sci-fi wrapping in the documentation, Empire was really a delightful multiplayer version of strategic-level WWII era warfare. The production level determined economic level, which, in turn, determined the potential number of military units available. Sure, it was a simple idea, but it worked brilliantly. As a multiplayer game, it could be played by "hot seat" (*CGW* deadlines were constantly in danger due to office games) and by PBEM. Not a direct port of the mainframe game, Baldwin's version added greater roles for destroyers and new intelligence algorithms, among other additions. Bob Rakosky joined Baldwin in the early '90s to recreate the system as Empire Deluxe, which offered improved graphics, interface mechanics, and multiplayer options.

Inductees Prior To 1989

- **Battle Chess** (Interplay Productions, 1988)
- **Chessmaster** (The Software Toolworks, 1986)
- **Dungeon Master** (FTL Software, 1987)
- **Earl Weaver Baseball** (Electronic Arts 1986)
- **Empire** (Interstel 1978)
- **F-19 Stealth Fighter** (MicroProse, 1988)
- **Gettysburg: The Turning Point** (SSI, 1986)
- **Kampfgruppe** (Strategic Simulations, 1985)
- **Mech Brigade** (Strategic Simulations, 1985)
- **Might & Magic** (New World Computing, 1986)
- **M.U.L.E.** (Electronic Arts, 1983)
- **Pirates** (MicroProse, 1987)
- **SimCity** (Maxis 1987)
- **Starflight** (Electronic Arts, 1986)
- **The Bard's Tale** (Electronic Arts 1985)
- **Ultima III** (Origin Systems, 1983)
- **Ultima IV** (Origin Systems, 1985)
- **War in Russia** (Strategic Simulations, 1984)
- **Wasteland** (Interplay Productions, 1986)
- **Wizardry** (Sir-Tech Software, 1981)
- **Zork** (Infocom 1981)

Modern Inductees

Alone in the Dark
(I-Motion, 1992)

Betrayal at Krondor
(Dynamix, 1993)

Day of the Tentacle
(LucasArts 1993)

Doom
(Id Software, 1993)

Falcon 3.0
(Spectrum HoloByte, 1991)

Front Page Sports Football Pro
(Dynamix, 1993)

Gunship
(MicroProse, 1989)

Harpoon
(Three-Sixty Pacific, 1989)

King's Quest V
(Sierra On-Line, 1990)

Lemmings
(Psygnosis, 1991)

Links 386 Pro
(Access Software, 1992)

M-1 Tank Platoon
(MicroProse, 1989)

Master of Orion
(MicroProse, 1993)

Railroad Tycoon
(MicroProse, 1990)

Red Baron
(Dynamix, 1990)

Sid Meier's Civilization
(MicroProse 1991)

Their Finest Hour
(LucasArts, 1989)

The Secret of Monkey Island
(LucasArts, 1990)

Tie Fighter
(LucasArts, 1994)

Ultima VI
(Origin Systems, 1990)

Ultima Underworld
(Origin Systems, 1992)

Wing Commander I & II
(Origin Systems, 1990-91)

Wolfenstein 3-D
(Id Software, 1992)

X-Com
(MicroProse, 1994)

Computer game programs have grown so massive and the number of hardware configurations has become so huge that incompatibilities and glitches are frustratingly common. Software fixes, or "patches," for buggy programs have become a necessary evil, and will be until we reach the golden age of standardized platforms and bug-free programs. New patches are in red.

Advanced Tactical Fighters V1.14: Many additions and changes give better weapons performance, enhance radar, and improve joystick support.

AH-64D Longbow V.1.08F: Updated flight dynamics, easier hovering and auto-rotation come to the hot helicopter simulation, along with new rotor/engine sounds.

Battleground: Waterloo V1.02: This new battle plan corrects errant PBEM replies and solves other random crashes

Civilization II V2.41 Update: It prevents crashes with auto-settlers, help, and Civilopedia screens, in addition to many other tweaks. This patch will reportedly work with and supersede all previous patches.

Command & Conquer V1.22: Updates versions 1.07, 1.18, 1.19, and 1.20 to current version, adding Windows 95 modem play, USR 14,400/28,800 UART speed, and fixing Diamond Viper palette/color problem.

Conquest of the New World V1.1 Update: This international patch contains the latest fixes for the German and French versions, as well as English

EF2000 V2.4: A new executable for the Premier Award–winning sim that doesn't add any new features, just fixes bugs.

Descent II Video Upgrade: Here you'll find new drivers for the S3 Virge 3D Accelerator Video Chip *only*

Fighter Duel V1.92: In addition to new aircraft in your hangar, you receive some minor fixes and additional joystick support

Grand Prix Manager V1.02: Tired of cars that jump from under the bridge at the crossover in Suzuka, or drivers that get hurt or sick too often? Take a pit stop with this latest patch

Heroes of Might and Magic for Win 95 V1.1: Anomalies with the cursor and in the Map Editor are magically cleaned up.

Jagged Alliance Deadly Games V1.12 Update: Mercs now speak up when they are spoken to. The F9 key will update the number of enemies in "sector" view, and modem dialing has been fixed to include asterisks and long phone numbers.

Jane's Longbow Patch: Your Longbow will now crash less due to DOS/4GW video hardware and memory settings conflicts. Combat is smoother, now that the shift +/- no longer gets stuck.

Madden Football 97 1.1: Fixes the QB/RB/TE freezing or running in place after the snap, and will enable you to update rosters. Doesn't help the AI or poor gamepad support, though.

Panthers in the Shadows Map List Utility: Allows you to print out a list of maps, with the map description linked to the actual file name

Quake V1.01: The fraggest extravaganza now sports new multiplayer code for modem play.

Star Trek Judgment Rites V 1.01 Update (Mac only): Mac users with 32 MB of real RAM or Macs with two monitors will find this patch more helpful than Mr. Scott during a Klingon attack.

Steel Panthers V.1.2: This armor upgrade cleans up the map editor, squashes a few bugs and polishes the AI

SVGA Air Warrior V1.16b: Dismisses a bug in the macro engine.

Tigers on the Prowl V2.02: Fixes many minor problems plus the involuntary dismount bug.

Warcraft 2 V1.2: Orcs and Humans alike will appreciate the new multiplayer options, including the shareware version of Kali and IPX network code optimized for better performance. The Exorcism spell problem is cast out, and you may now have more than 255 PUD files in the WAR2 directory. A good patch to have before trying any of the add-on packs.

Wizardry Gold V1.1a: Problems with saves in the earlier patch? This takes care of that as well as difficulties with level increases when skills reach 100. Finally, it also allows you to set combat and non-combat text speeds separately.

▸ Check for new patches on this month's disk.

ZDNet

These patches can usually be downloaded from the major on-line networks (CompuServe, AOL, ZDNet) and *Computer Gaming World*'s Web site (http://www.zdnet.com/gaming) but can also be obtained from individual software publishers' Web sites or direct from the publisher with proof of purchase.

Publisher Web Sites

Many patches are available directly from the publishers, at the following sites:

Accolade: http://www.accolade.com
Activision: http://www.activision.com
Apogee/3D Realms: http://www.apogee1.com
Atomic Games: http://atomic.com
Bethesda: http://www.bethsoft.com
Blizzard: http://www.blizzard.com
Bullfrog: http://www.ea.com/bullfrog.html
Domark: http://www.domark.com
EA: http://www.ea.com
EA Sports: http://www.easports.com
Epic MegaGames: http://www.epicgames.com
Id Software: http://www.idsoftware.com
Interactive Magic: http://www.imagicgames.com
Interplay: http://www.interplay.com
LucasArts: http://www.lucasarts.com
MicroProse/Spectrum HoloByte: http://www.microprose.com
Microsoft: http://www.microsoft.com
Mindscape: http://www.mindscape.com
New World Computing: http://www.nwcomputing.com
Ocean: http://www.ef2000.com
Origin: http://www.ea.com/origin
Papyrus: http://www.sierra.com/papyrus
Philips: http://www.aimla.com/games
Sierra On-Line: http://www.sierra.com
Spectrum HoloByte: http://www.microprose.com
SSI: http://www.ssionline.com
Take 2: http://www.take2games.com/main.html
Virgin: http://www.vie.com

THE COMPUTER GAMING POLL • A MONTHLY SURVEY OF CGW SUBSCRIBERS

Each month, 2,000 *CGW* subscribers are selected at random to rate 100 computer games. The results of that poll are combined with the results of previous months to yield a cumulative average for the best plays in gaming. If you receive a ballot, please return it with your ratings so that other gamers and game publishers can benefit from your experience.

TOP ACTION GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Duke Nukem 3D	Apogee	8.64
2	Crusader: No Remorse	EA/Origin	8.26
3	Crusader: No Regret	EA/Origin	8.17
4	The Need for Speed SE	EA	8.14
5	Quake	Id Software	7.95
6	Dark Forces	LucasArts	7.81
7	Doom II	id Software	7.78
8	The Need for Speed	EA	7.66
9	Descent II	Interplay	7.53
10	EWJ 1&2: Whole Can O' Worms	Playmates	7.47

TOP ADVENTURE GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Gabriel Knight 2	Sierra	8.37
2	Pandora Directive	Access	8.30
3	Spycraft	Activision	7.80
4	Full Throttle	LucasArts	7.56
5	Zork Nemesis	Activision	7.44
6	Star Control 3	Accolade	7.39
7	Under a Killing Moon	Access	7.37
8	Phantasmagoria	Sierra	7.27
9	The Dig	LucasArts	7.12
10	Relentless	EA	7.08

TOP CLASSIC/PUZZLE GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	You Don't Know Jack	Berkeley System	8.05
2	Incredible Toons	Sierra	7.28
3	Incredible Machine 2	Sierra	7.11
4	Monopoly	Westwood/Virgin	6.84
5	Lemmings Paintball	Psygnosis	5.98
6	Gearheads	Philips	5.72
7	—		
8	—		
9	—		
10	—		

TOP SIMULATION/SPACE COMBAT GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Wing Commander IV	EA/Origin	8.57
2	Grand Prix 2	MicroProse	8.49
3	MechWarrior 2	Activision	8.37
4	AH-64 Longbow	EA	8.28
5	Wing Commander 3	EA/Origin	8.27
6	Silent Hunter	SSI	8.00
	EF2000	Ocean	8.00
8	U.S. Marine Fighters	EA	7.97
9	Advanced Tactical Fighters	EA	7.85
10	NASCAR Racing	Papyrus	7.76

TOP SPORTS GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Links LS	Access	8.67
2	NHL Hockey 96	EA Sports	7.85
3	Tripleplay 97	EA Sports	7.79
4	FPS Football Pro 96	Sierra	7.74
5	NBA Live 96	EA Sports	7.70
6	NBA Live 95	EA Sports	7.62
7	PGA Tour Golf 486	EA Sports	7.47
8	Madden 97	EA Sports	7.46
9	Tony Larussa 3 96	Stormfront Studios	7.44
10	NHL Powerplay	Virgin	7.43

TOP STRATEGY GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Warcraft II Expansion	Blizzard	9.07
2	Warcraft II	Blizzard	8.98
3	Civilization II	MicroProse	8.85
4	C&C: Covert Operations	Westwood/Virgin	8.56
5	Command & Conquer	Westwood/Virgin	8.47
6	Heroes of Might & Magic	New World Computing	8.08
7	Master of Magic	MicroProse	8.01
8	Jagged Alliance: Deadly Games	Sir-Tech	7.87
9	Jagged Alliance	Sir-Tech	7.85
10	Warlords II Deluxe	SSG	7.75

TOP ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Daggerfall	Bethesda	7.95
2	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World Computing	7.65
3	Anvil of Dawn	New World Computing	7.35
4	Stonekeep	Interplay	7.06
5	Ravenloft: Stone Prophet	SSI	6.85
6	Wolf	Sanctuary Woods	6.21
7	—		
8	—		
9	—		
10	—		

TOP WARGAMES

	GAME	COMPANY	SCORE
1	Steel Panthers Campaign Disk	SSI	8.65
2	Steel Panthers	SSI	8.52
3	Panzer General	SSI	8.38
4	Battleground: Shiloh	TalonSoft	8.07
5	Battleground: Waterloo	TalonSoft	7.70
6	Battleground: Gettysburg	TalonSoft	7.44
7	Age of Rifles	SSI	7.14
8	Flight Commander 2	Avalon Hill	7.07
9	Perfect General II	QQP	7.04
10	Allied General	SSI	6.83

	GAME	COMPANY	TYPE	SCORE
★ 1	Warcraft II Expansion	Blizzard	ST	9.07
2	Warcraft II	Blizzard	ST	8.98
3	Civilization II	MicroProse	ST	8.85
★ 4	Links LS	Access	SP	8.67
★ 5	Steel Panthers Campaign Disk	SSI	WG	8.65
★ 6	Duke Nukem 3D	Apogee	AC	8.64
★ 7	Wing Commander IV	EA/Origin	SI	8.57
8	C&C: Covert Operations	Virgin/Westwood	ST	8.56
9	Steel Panthers	SSI	WG	8.52
10	Grand Prix 2	MicroProse	SI	8.49
11	Command & Conquer	Virgin/Westwood	ST	8.47
12	Panzer General	SSI	WG	8.38
13	MechWarrior 2	Activision	SI	8.37
★	Gabriel Knight 2	Sierra	AD	8.37
15	Pandora Directive	Access	AD	8.30
16	AH-64 Longbow	EA	SI	8.28
17	Wing Commander 3	EA/Origin	SI	8.27
18	Crusader: No Remorse	EA/Origin	AC	8.26
19	Crusader: No Regret	EA/Origin	AC	8.17
20	The Need for Speed SE	EA	AC	8.14
21	Heroes of Might & Magic	New World Computing	ST	8.08
22	Battleground: Shiloh	TalonSoft	WG	8.07
★ 23	You Don't Know Jack	Berkeley Systems	CP	8.05
24	Master of Magic	MicroProse	ST	8.01
25	Silent Hunter	SSI	SI	8.00
	EF2000	Ocean	SI	8.00
27	U.S. Marine Fighters	EA	SI	7.97
★ 28	Daggerfall	Bethesda	RP	7.95
	Quake	Id Software	AC	7.95
30	Jagged Alliance: Deadly Games	Sir-Tech	ST	7.87
31	Jagged Alliance	Sir-Tech	ST	7.85
	Advanced Tactical Fighters	EA	SI	7.85
	NHL Hockey 96	EA Sports	SP	7.85
34	Dark Forces	LucasArts	AC	7.81
35	Spycraft	Activision	AD	7.80
36	Tripleplay 97	EA Sports	SP	7.79
37	Doom II	id Software	AC	7.78
38	NASCAR Racing	Papyrus	SI	7.76
39	Warlords II Deluxe	SSG	ST	7.75
40	FPS Football Pro 96	Sierra	SP	7.74
	Warcraft	Blizzard	ST	7.74
42	Battleground: Waterloo	TalonSoft	WG	7.70
	NBA Live 96	EA Sports	SP	7.70
44	Fantasy General	SSI	ST	7.68
45	The Need for Speed	EA	AC	7.66
46	Might & Magic: Clouds of Xeen	New World Computing	RP	7.65
47	NBA Live 95	EA Sports	SP	7.62
48	Missionforce Cyberstorm	Sierra	ST	7.58
49	Full Throttle	LucasArts	AD	7.56
	U.S. Navy Fighters	EA	SI	7.56
51	CivNet	MicroProse	ST	7.53
	Descent II	Interplay	AC	7.53
53	PGA Tour Golf 486	EA Sports	SP	7.47
	EWJ 1&2: Whole Can O' Worms	Playmates	AC	7.47
55	Madden 97	EA Sports	SP	7.46
56	Zork Nemesis	Activision	AD	7.44
	Tony Larussa 3 96	Stormfront Studios	SP	7.44
	Battleground: Gettysburg	TalonSoft	WG	7.44
59	NHL Powerplay	Virgin	SP	7.43
60	Time Commando	Activision	AC	7.42
61	FPS Football 95	Sierra	SP	7.41
62	Star Control 3	Accolade	AD	7.39
63	X-Com: Terror from the Deep	MicroProse	ST	7.38
64	Under a Killing Moon	Access	AD	7.37
65	Magic Carpet 2	Bullfrog	AC	7.35
	Anvil of Dawn	New World Computing	RP	7.35
67	Hexen	id/Raven	AC	7.34
68	Sim City CD-ROM	Maxis	ST	7.31
	Virtua Fighter PC	Sega	AC	7.31
70	Incredible Toons	Sierra	CP	7.28
71	Phantasmagoria	Sierra	AD	7.27
72	Terra Nova: Strike Force Centauri	Looking Glass	AC	7.25
73	Virtual Pool	Interplay	SP	7.23
74	Wings of Glory	Origin	SI	7.22
75	Flight Unlimited	Looking Glass	SI	7.20
76	Hyper 3D Pinball	Virgin	AC	7.17
	Hardball 5	Accolade	SP	7.17
78	Age of Rifles	SSI	WG	7.14
79	The Dig	LucasArts	AD	7.12
80	Incredible Machine 2	Sierra	CP	7.11
81	Caesar II	Sierra	ST	7.10
82	System Shock	EA/Origin	AC	7.08
	Relentless	EA	AD	7.08
	Star Trek: TNG, Final Unity	Spectrum HoloByte	AD	7.08
85	1942 Pacific Air War Gold	MicroProse	SI	7.07
	Flight Commander 2	Avalon Hill	WG	7.07
87	Stonekeep	Interplay	RP	7.06
88	Perfect General II	QQP	WG	7.04
	Warhammer	Mindscape	ST	7.04
90	Aces of the Deep	Sierra	SI	7.03
91	Heretic	id/Raven	AC	7.02
92	Z	Virgin	ST	7.01
93	Settlers II	Blue Byte	ST	7.00
94	Deadlock	Accolade	ST	6.94
95	Legends of Kyrandia 3	Westwood/Virgin	AD	6.93
96	Earthsiege 2	Sierra	SI	6.92
97	Apache	Interactive Magic	SI	6.90
98	Ravenloft: Stone Prophet	SSI	RP	6.85
99	Monopoly	Westwood/Virgin	CP	6.84
100	Allied General	SSI	WG	6.83

Games on unnumbered lines have scores equal to the line above. ★ = Top game of type. Red = New Game, AD = Adventure, RP = Role-Playing, SI = Simulation/Space Combat, ST = Strategy, WG = Wargame, AC = Action, SP = Sports, CP = Classic/Puzzle. Games are retired after two years and become eligible for the Hall of Fame.

MARTIN CIRULIS

What's The Deal With... Design Hype?

One thing that has always bugged me are the guys who plan to save the world without really knowing how things work. Specifically, in our case, designers who pop up and claim they are going to "revolutionize gaming"—when what they really should say is, "I am so out of touch with the market that I have no idea I am churning out derivative crap."

Now, granted, a lot of the blame for these claims lies with writers and editors who know as little about games as the designers they are writing about. If you doubt this, see *Wired*'s Web site for the back issue where they went on and on about the incredibly hip Rocket Science, failing to reveal that they knew squat about design or the computer game industry. If the reporter had a clue, one look at CADILLACS & DINOSAURS or that awful space trucking game LOADSTAR should have been enough to raise suspicion about the company's design direction.

Of course, you have to expect that kind of thing in the "mainstream" magazines, even ones supposedly on the cutting edge of all things computer-ish, because their interest in and knowledge of gaming begins and ends with breakout titles like MYST or DOOM. They are far more interested in the sales numbers, or how cute it is that the designers still dine on beer and peanut butter when they can afford caviar. Rarely is anything written about what makes the cash cow a good game. But even in our hallowed halls of *CGW*, our desire to see something new often blinds us to the fact you have to master the form before you can fool with it.

How many times has the phrase "It's not JUST a game!" gone by without a note of challenge? As if the word "JUST" wasn't a slap in the face to every decent designer. "Not JUST a game" annoys me the same way that Saturn commercials do: for all the endless posturing, your damn car better have six wheels and nuclear engines. In the relatively short history of computer gaming, there have only been a handful of games that offered "more," notably Chris Crawford's BALANCE OF POWER and the SIM-EARTH/SIM-LIFE pairings from Maxis. Apart from the exceptions, "not just a game," when paired with a new company, translates to me as: "We can't be bothered to actually understand the industry and we really think games are kind of stupid, but we looked at the profit margin on MYST and decided that it shouldn't be too hard to impress the geeks." I realize that might sound a bit harsh, but how else does one explain such gems as Mode from Corel? Or many of the other FMV disasters from various start-up companies? Games (except for those that fill gambling coffers, that is) are so often associated only with children, in this culture, that the assumption must be that creating them is child's play.

I know that many times this take on game creation is due to geniuses in marketing, as opposed to the guys actually doing the work. I find it hard to believe that the designers of HUNTER/HUNTED and CYBERGLADIATORS really think they are part of the rebel underground at Sierra (see Sierra's Fall '96 INTERACTION magazine). I mean, if you want to strut around like ground-breaking designers, fine—but you're not going to get a lot of acknowledgment when your first offerings are a side-scroller with 3D effects and a 3D fighting robot game. C'mon, a fighting robot game? ONE MUST FALL 2 ring any bells, boys? RISE OF THE ROBOTS? RISE 2 RESURRECTION? There must have been some project closer to your heart, begging to be made long before that.

> **"Claims of 'Not JUST a game!' annoy me the same way that Saturn commercials do."**

I guess what I am trying to say is that game design isn't easy. Game theory is its own small, respected branch of Mathematics. Hell, I still have nightmares about my Stats 305 final. And even apart from the science of balancing probabilities, it is a fine art to combine various elements into something that is: a) even remotely original, and b) actually entertaining/interesting/relevant. The second requirement is not quite so noble, but it's one that designers like Derek Smart and even a real talent like Crawford seem to have forgotten while pursuing loftier goals. The whole VGA PLANETS saga shows, if nothing else, that if you build a good game, they will come. And all the pretty graphics and marketing bumbling in the world will not distract them.

So for those who want to surpass the field without mastering it, I have but one response.

"Not JUST a game!"?

You should be so bloody lucky.

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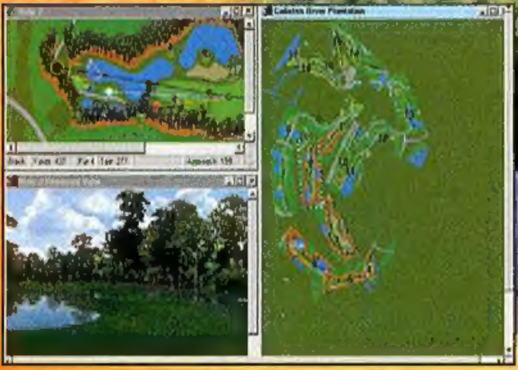
Jack is Back!

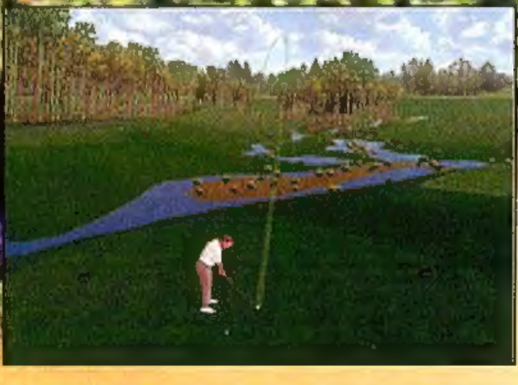
The Course Designer



This is the Course Designer that created all 5 Nicklaus-designed courses in the game!

Use the Designer to re-create your favorite course! Import, modify, and play courses from previous Nicklaus games!

From Tee to Green



Challenge golfing legend Jack Nicklaus – The Golfer of the Century – on one of his own signature courses!

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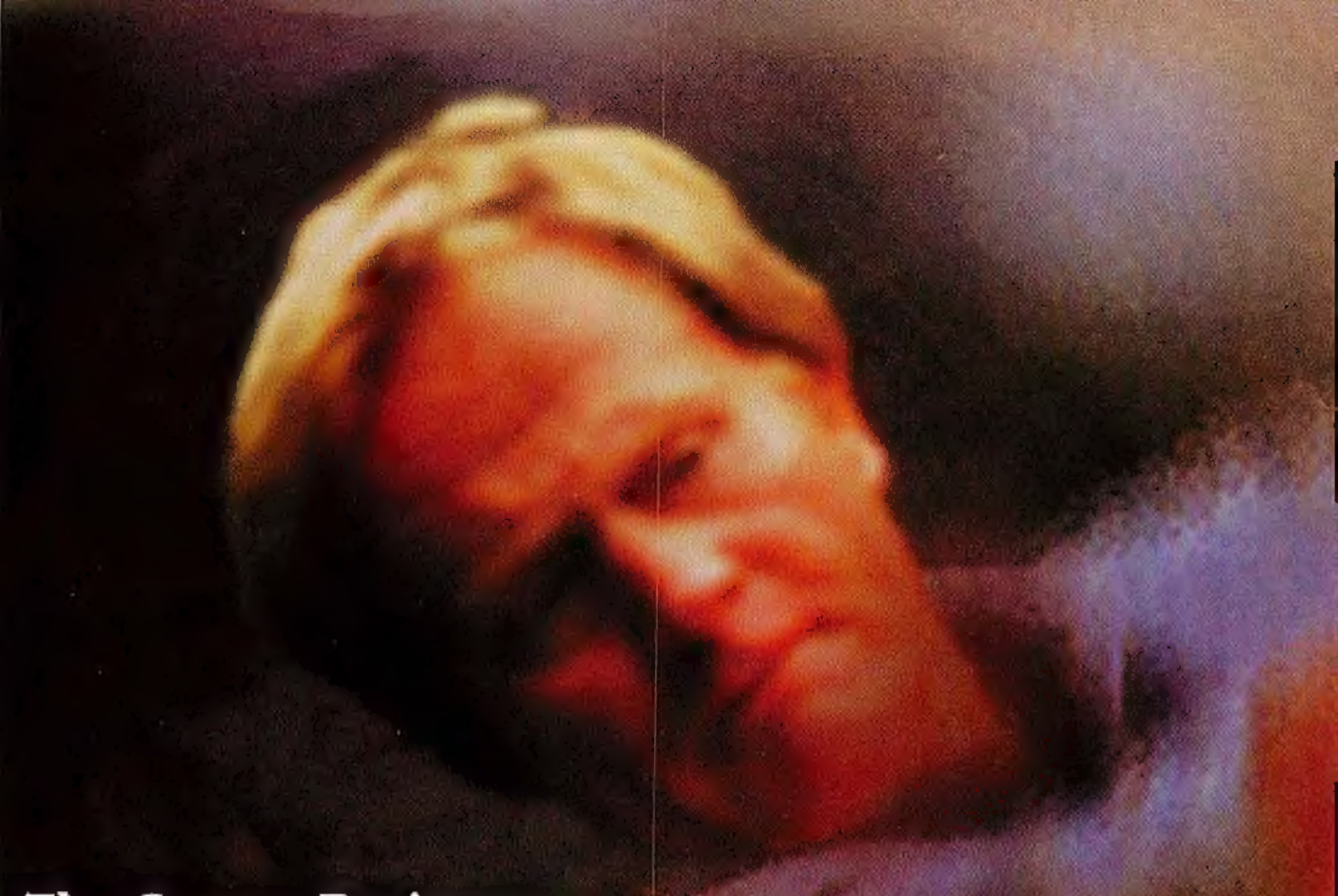
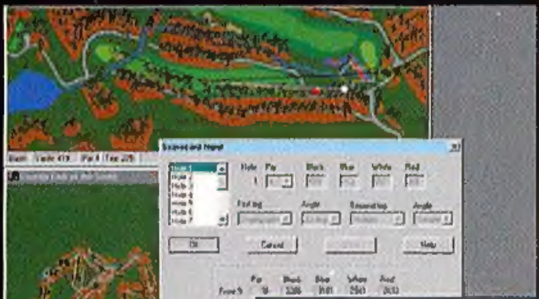
CIRCLE READER SERVICE #**290**



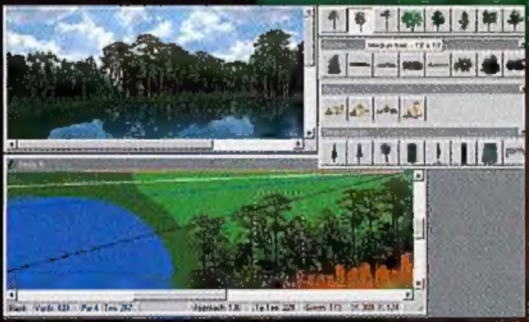
The Course Designer



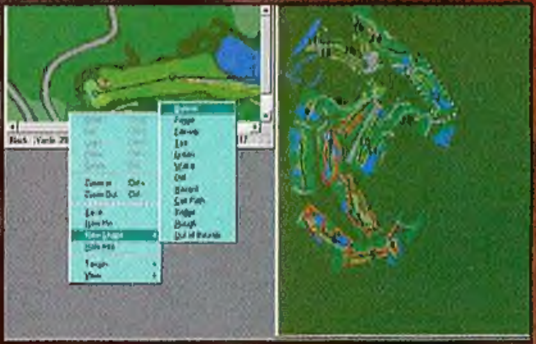
Input the basic details of a course from a real scorecard–the "Wizard" automatically routes each hole.

"Is it live or is it...?" Our Course Designer is so true-to-life, it's hard to tell the difference!

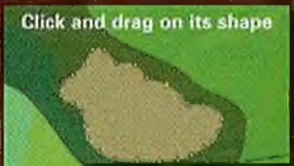
This image is of the 3rd Green at Country Club of the South. The left half of the image is from the Course Designer; the right half of the image is an actual photo.



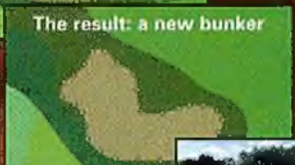
Choose from over 100 different types of trees, bushes, rocks, and other objects!



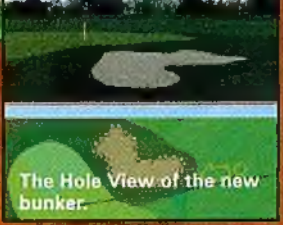
Choose from a variety of templates, or create your own shapes. Changing terrain is as easy as click-and-drag.



Click and drag on its shape



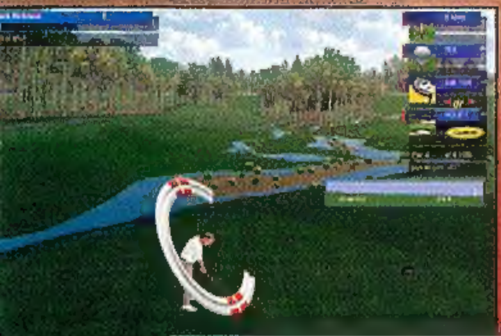
The result: a new bunker



The Hole View of the new bunker.

From Tee to Green

The Tee Shot



Pop-up displays are optional–leave them off for the purest golfing experience.

4-bit color lets
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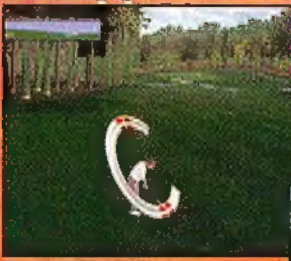
Replay shots from unlimited camera angles, from ground level, or up to 300 feet in the air!

The fastest screen redraw times on the PC allow the camera to automatically switch to the landing in full-screen, from varying viewpoints!

The Approach Shot



New "Intensity Control™" reproduces the dynamics that shape the shot. "Club up and swing easy" for control or a low trajectory; "swing hard" when you want spin and distance.

Every shot flies, bounces, and rolls true to the game, with the best ball physics model in existence. Courses are accurate to within 6 inches!

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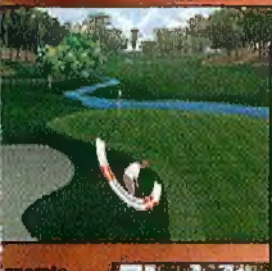
Around The Green



With beautiful, high-speed graphics, a true physics model, more realistic swing meters, better putting, and unlimited camera positions, *Jack Nicklaus 4* is truly the game every golfer has anticipated!

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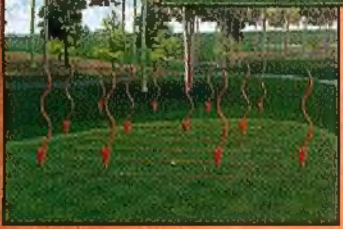

Our new approach makes putting more realistic. Mow lines on the green help you read the contour.

For enhanced gameplay, this optional grid floats down and drapes itself over the green, clearly showing all high and low spots.

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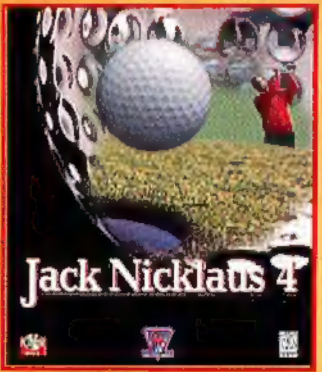
Look for the Jack Nicklaus 4 playable demos in select magazines or online at **http://www.accolade.com**

For hints and tips on Accolade products, call Accolade Direct 1-900-454-HINT. $0.99/minute. If you are under 18, please get your parents' permission before making this call.



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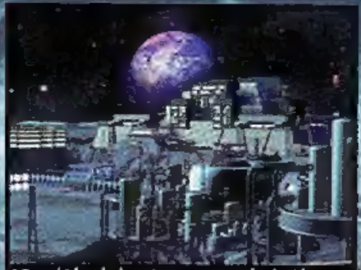

10 multi-leveled environments packed with incredible detail, death and destruction.

Run, dive and roll with 21 fast-action maneuvers. See visible damage from every shot fired.

TEEN

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